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BELFORD REGIS.

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BELFORD REGIS;

OR

SKETCHES OF A COUNTRY TOWN.

BY

MARY RUSSELL MITFORD,

AUTHORESS OF

“RIENZI,” “OUR VILLAGE,” &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1835.



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TO HIS GRACE

THE DUKE OF DEVONSHIRE,

In token of sincere gratitude for many kindnesses received at his hands, and of unfeigned admiration for his refined taste, his active benevolence, and his wide-reaching sympathy,—that sympathy which at all seasons, and more especially in times like the present, forms the best and safest link between the different classes of society,—

THESE HOMELY SKETCHES

are most respectfully inscribed by

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IN an Article on the last Volume of "Our Village," the courteous critic recommended, since I had taken leave of rural life, that I should engage lodgings in the next country town, and commence a series of sketches of the inhabitants; a class of the community which, whilst it forms so large a portion of our population, occupies so small a space in our literature, and amongst whom, more perhaps than amongst any other order of English society, may be traced the peculiarities, the prejudices, and the excellences of the national character.

"Upon this hint I *wrote*;" and the present work would have been called simply "Our

Market Town," had not an ingenious contemporary, by forestalling my intended title, compelled me to give to "*my* airy nothings, a local habitation and a name."* It would not quite do to have two "Simon Pures" in the field, each asserting his identity and jostling for precedence; although I am so far from accusing Mr. Peregrine Reedpen (as the Frenchman did the ancients) of having stolen my best thoughts, that I am firmly of opinion that were twenty writers to sit down at once to compose a book upon this theme, there would not be the slightest danger of their interfering with each other. Every separate work would bear the stamp of the Author's mind, of his peculiar train of thought, and habits of observation. The subject is as inexhaustible as nature herself.

One favour, the necessity of which has been pressed upon me by painful experience, I have to entreat most earnestly at the hands of my readers, — a favour the very reverse of that which story-tellers by profession are wont

* "Our Town; or, Rough Sketches of Character, Manners, &c. By Peregrine Reedpen." 2 vols. London, 1834.

to implore ! It is that they will do me the justice *not* to believe one word of these sketches from beginning to end. General truth of delineation I hope there is ; but of individual portrait painting, I most seriously assert that none has been intended, and none, I firmly trust, can be found. From this declaration I except of course the notes which consist professedly of illustrative anecdotes, and the paper on the Greek plays, which contains a feeble attempt to perpetuate one of the happiest recollections of my youth. Belford itself too, may perhaps be identified ; for I do not deny having occasionally stolen some touches of local scenery from the beautiful town that comes so frequently before my eyes. But the inhabitants of Belford, the Stephen Lanes, the Peter Jenkinses and the King Harwoods, exist only in these pages ; and if there should be any persons who, after this protest, should obstinately persist in mistaking for fact that which the Author herself declares to be fiction, I can only compare them to the sagacious gentleman mentioned in “ *The Spectator*,” who upon reading over

“The Whole Duty of Man,” wrote the names of different people in the village where he lived at the side of every sin mentioned by the author, and with half-a-dozen strokes of his pen turned the whole of that devout and pious treatise into a libel.

Be more merciful to these slight volumes, gentle reader, and farewell !

Three Mile Cross,
Feb. 25th, 1835.

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BELFORD REGIS.

THE TOWN.

ABOUT three miles to the north of our village, (if my readers may be supposed to have heard of such a place,) stands the good town of Belford Regis. The approach to it, straight as a dart, runs along a wide and populous turnpike-road, (for as yet railways are not,) all alive with carts and coaches, waggons and phaetons, horse people and foot people, sweeping rapidly or creeping lazily up and down the gentle undulations with which the surface of the country is varied; and the borders, checkered by patches of common, rich with hedge-row timber, and sprinkled with cottages, and, I grieve to say, with that

cottage pest, the beer-houses,—and here and there enlivened by dwellings of more pretension and gentility—become more thickly inhabited as we draw nearer to the metropolis of the county : to say nothing of the three cottages all in a row, with two small houses detached, which a board affixed to one of them informs the passers-by is ‘Two mile Cross;’ or of those opposite neighbours the wheelwrights and the blacksmiths, about half-a-mile farther ; or the little farm close to the pound ; or the series of buildings called the Long Row, terminating at the end next the road with an old-fashioned and most picturesque public-house, with pointed roofs, and benches at the door, and round the large elm before it,—benches which are generally filled by thirsty wayfarers, and waggoners watering their horses and partaking a more generous liquor themselves.

Leaving these objects undescribed, no sooner do we get within a mile of the town, than our approach is indicated by successive market-gardens on either side, crowned, as we ascend the long hill on which the turnpike-gate stands,

by an extensive nursery-ground, gay with long beds of flowers, with trellised walks covered with creepers, with whole acres of flowering shrubs, and ranges of green-houses, the glass glittering in the southern sun. Then the turnpike-gate, with its civil keeper—then another public-house—then the clear bright pond on the top of the hill, and then the rows of small tenements, with here and there a more ambitious single cottage standing in its own pretty garden, which forms the usual gradation from the country to the town.

About this point, where one road, skirting the great pond and edged by small houses, diverges from the great southern entrance, and where two streets meeting or parting lead by separate ways down the steep hill to the centre of the town, stands a handsome mansion, surrounded by orchards and pleasure-grounds; across which is perhaps to be seen the very best view of Belford, with its long ranges of modern buildings in the outskirts, mingled with picturesque old streets; the venerable towers of St. Stephen's and St. Nicholas'; the light

and tapering spire of St. John's ; the huge monastic ruins of the abbey ; the massive walls of the county gaol ; the great river winding along like a thread of silver ; trees and gardens mingling amongst all ; and the whole landscape enriched and lightened by the dropping elms of the foreground, adding an illusive beauty to the picture, by breaking the too formal outline, and veiling just exactly those parts which most require concealment.

Nobody can look at Belford from this point, without feeling that it is a very English and very charming scene ; and the impression does not diminish on farther acquaintance. We see at once the history of the place, that it is an ancient borough town, which has recently been extended to nearly double its former size ; so that it unites, in no common degree, the old romantic irregular structures in which our ancestors delighted, with the handsome and uniform buildings which are the fashion now-a-days. I suppose that people are right in their taste, and that the modern houses are pleasantest to live in ; but, beyond all question, those antique streets

are the prettiest to look at. The occasional blending, too, is good. Witness the striking piece of street scenery, which was once accidentally forced upon my attention as I took shelter from a shower of rain in a shop, about ten doors up the right-hand side of Friar-street: the old vicarage-house of St. Nicholas, embowered in evergreens; the lofty town-hall, and the handsome modern house of my friend Mr. Beauchamp; the fine church-tower of St. Nicholas; the picturesque piazza underneath; the jutting corner of Friar-street; the old irregular shops in the market-place, and the trees of the Forbury just peeping between, with all their varieties of light and shadow! It is a scene fit for that matchless painter of towns, Mr. Jones. I went to the door to see if the shower were over, was caught by its beauty, and stood looking at it in the sunshine long after the rain had ceased.

Then, again, for a piece of antiquity, what can be more picturesque than the high solitary bay-window in that old house in Mill-lane, garlanded with grapes, and hanging over the

water, as if to admire its own beauty in that clear mirror? That projecting window is a picture in itself.

Or, for a modern scene, what can surpass the High Bridge on a sunshiny-day? The bright river, crowded with barges and small craft; the streets, and wharfs, and quays, all alive with the busy and stirring population of the country and the town; — a combination of light and motion. In looking at a good view of the High Bridge at noon, you should seem to hear the bustle. I have never seen a more cheerful subject.

Cheerfulness is, perhaps, the word that best describes the impression conveyed by the more frequented streets of Belford. It is not a manufacturing town, and its trade is solely that dependent on its own considerable population, and the demands of a thickly inhabited neighbourhood; so that, except in the very centre of that trade, the streets where the principal shops are congregated, or on certain public occasions, such as elections, fairs, and markets, the stir hardly amounts to bustle. Neither is it a professed

place of gaiety, like Cheltenham or Brighton ; where London people go to find or make a smaller London out of town. It is neither more nor less than an honest English borough, fifty good miles from “the deep, deep sea,” and happily free from the slightest suspicion of any spa, chalybeate or saline. We have, it is true, “the Kennet swift, for silver eels renowned,” passing through the walls, and the mighty Thames for a near neighbour—water in plenty, but luckily all fresh ! They who sympathize in my dislike of the vulgar finery, the dull dissipation, of a watering-place, will feel all the felicity of this exemption.

Clean, airy, orderly, and affluent ; well paved, well lighted, well watched ; abounding in wide and spacious streets, filled with excellent shops and handsome houses ;—such is the outward appearance, the bodily form, of our market-town. For the vital spirit, the life-blood that glows and circulates through the dead mass of mortar and masonry,—in other words, for the inhabitants,—I must refer my courteous reader to the following pages. If they do not appear

to at least equal advantage, it will be the fault of the chronicler, and not of the subject ; and one cause, one singular cause, which may make the chronicler somewhat deficient as a painter of modern manners, may be traced to the fact of her having known the place, not too well, but too long.

It is now about forty years ago, since I, a damsel scarcely so high as the table on which I am writing, and somewhere about four years old, first became an inhabitant of Belford ; and really I remember a great deal not worth remembering concerning the place, especially our own garden, and a certain dell on the Bristol road to which I used to resort for primroses. Then we went away ; and my next recollections date some ten years afterwards, when my father again resided in the outskirts of the town during the time that he was building in the neighbourhood, and I used to pass my holidays there, and loved the place as a school-girl does love her home. And although we have kept up a visiting acquaintance, Belford and I, ever since, and I have watched its improvements of

every kind with sincere interest and pleasure,—especially that most striking and yet most gradual change which has taken place amongst the great tradesmen, now so universally intelligent and cultivated,—yet these recollections of thirty years back, my personal experience of the far narrower and more limited society of the gentry of the place—the old ladies and their tea visits, the gentlemen and their whist club, and the merry Christmas parties, with their round games and their social suppers, their mirth and their jests;—recollections such as these, with the dear familiar faces and the pleasant associations of my girlish days, will prevail, do what I can, over the riper but less vivid impressions of a maturer age, and the more refined but less picturesque state of manners of the present race of inhabitants.

So far it seemed necessary to premise, lest these general sketches of country town society (for of individual portraiture I again assert my innocence) should exhibit Belford as a quarter of a century behind in the grand march of civilisation : and I hereby certify, that whatever

want of modern elegance or of modish luxury may be observed in these delineations, is to be ascribed, not to any such deficiency in the genteel circles of that "famous town," but to the peculiar tastes and old-fashioned predilections of the writer.

STEPHEN LANE, THE BUTCHER.

THE greatest man in these parts (I use the word in the sense of *Louis-le-Gros*, not *Louis-le-Grand*), the greatest man hereabouts, by at least a stone, is our worthy neighbour Stephen Lane, the grazier, — ex-butcher of Belford. Nothing so big hath been seen since Lambert the gaoler, or the Durham ox.

When he walks, he overfills the pavement, and is more difficult to pass than a link of full-dressed misses, or a chain of becloaked dandies. Indeed, a malicious attorney, in drawing up a paving bill for the ancient borough of Belford Regis, once inserted a clause confining Mr. Lane to the middle of the road, together with waggons, vans, stage-coaches, and other heavy articles. Chairs crack under him, — couches rock, — bolsters groan, — and floors tremble. He hath

been stuck in a staircase and jammed in a doorway, and has only escaped being ejected from an omnibus by its being morally and physically impossible that he should get in. His passing the window has something such an effect as an eclipse, or as turning outward the opaque side of that ingenious engine of mischief, a dark lantern. He puts out the light like Othello. A small wit of our town, by calling a supervisor, who dabbles in riddles, and cuts no inconsiderable figure in the poet's corner of the county newspaper, once perpetrated a conundrum on his person, which, as relating to so eminent and well-known an individual, (for almost every reader of the "H——shire Herald" hath, at some time or other, been a customer of our butcher's,) had the honour of puzzling more people at the Sunday morning breakfast-table, and of engaging more general attention, than had ever before happened to that respectable journal. A very horrible murder, (and there was that week one of the very first water,) two shipwrecks, an *enlèvement*, and an execution, were

all passed over as trifles compared with the interest excited by this literary squib and cracker. A trifling quirk it was to keep Mr. Stacy, the surveyor, a rival bard, fuming over his coffee until the said coffee grew cold ; or to hold Miss Anna Maria Watkins, the mantua-maker, in pleasant though painful efforts at divination until the bell rang for church, and she had hardly time to undo her curl-papers and arrange her ringlets ; a flimsy quirk it was of a surety, an inconsiderable quiddity ! Yet since the courteous readers of the “ H——shire Herald ” were amused with pondering over it, so perchance may be the no less courteous and far more courtly readers of these slight sketches. I insert it, therefore, for their edification, together with the answer, which was not published in the “ Herald ” until the H——shire public had remained an entire week in suspense :—

“ *Query* — Why is Mr. Stephen Lane like Rembrandt ? ” — “ *Answer* — Because he is famous for the breadth of his shadow.”

The length of his shadow, although by no means in proportion to the width, — for that

would have recalled the days when giants walked the land, and Jack, the famous Jack, who borrowed his surname from his occupation, slew them,—was yet of pretty fair dimensions. He stood six feet two inches without his shoes, and would have been accounted an exceedingly tall man if his intolerable fatness had not swallowed up all minor distinctions. That magnificent *beau idéal* of a human mountain, “the fat woman of Brentford,” for whom Sir John Falstaff passed not only undetected, but unsuspected, never crossed my mind’s eye but as the feminine of Mr. Stephen Lane. Tailors, although he was a liberal and punctual paymaster, dreaded his custom. They could not, charge how they might, contrive to extract any profit from his “huge rotundity.” It was not only the quantity of material that he took, and yet that cloth universally called broad was not broad enough for him,—it was not only the stuff, but the work—the sewing, stitching, plaiting, and button-holing without end. The very shears grew weary of their labours. Two fashionable suits might have been constructed

in the time, and from the materials consumed in the fabrication of one for Mr. Stephen Lane. Two, did I say? Ay, three or four, with a sufficient allowance of cabbage, — a perquisite never to be extracted from his coats or waist-coats—no, not enough to cover a penwiper. Let the cutter cut his cloth ever so largely, it was always found to be too little. All their measures put together would not go round him; and as to guessing at his proportions by the eye, a tailor might as well attempt to calculate the dimensions of a seventy-four-gun ship, — as soon try to fit a three-decker. Gloves and stockings were made for his especial use. Extras and double extras failed utterly in his case, as the dapper shopman espied at the first glance of his huge paw, a fist which might have felled an ox, and somewhat resembled the dead ox-flesh, commonly called beef, in texture and colour.

To say the truth, his face was pretty much of the same complexion—and yet it was no un-comely visage either; on the contrary, it was a bold, bluff, massive, English countenance, such

as Holbein would have liked to paint, in which great manliness and determination were blended with much good-humour, and a little humour of another kind ; so that even when the features were in seeming repose, you could foresee how the face would look when a broad smile, and a sly wink, and a knowing nod, and a demure smoothing down of his straight shining hair on his broad forehead gave his wonted cast of drolery to the blunt but merry tradesman, to whom might have been fitly applied the Chinese compliment, " Prosperity is painted on your countenance."

Stephen Lane, however, had not always been so prosperous, or so famous for the breadth of his shadow. Originally a foundling in the streets of Belford, he owed his very name, like the " Richard Monday" of one of Crabbe's finest delineations, to the accident of his having been picked up, when apparently about a week old, in a by-lane, close to St. Stephen's church-yard, and baptized by order of the vestry after the scene of his discovery. Like the hero of the poet, he also was sent to the parish workhouse ; but, as unlike to Richard

Monday in character as in destiny, he won, by a real or fancied resemblance to a baby whom she had recently lost, the affection of the matron, and was by her care shielded, not only from the physical dangers of infancy, in such an abode, but from the moral perils of childhood.

Kindly yet roughly reared, Stephen Lane was even as a boy eminent for strength and hardihood, and invincible good-humour. At ten years old he had fought with and vanquished every lad under fifteen, not only in the workhouse proper, but in the immediate purlicus of that respectable domicile; and would have got into a hundred scrapes, had he not been shielded, in the first place, by the active protection of his original patroness, the wife of the superintendent and master of the establishment, whose pet he continued to be; and, in the second, by his own bold and decided, yet kindly and affectionate temper. Never had a boy of ten years old more friends than the poor foundling of St. Stephen's workhouse. There was hardly an inmate of that miscellaneous dwelling, who had not profited, at some time or other, by the good-

humoured lad's delightful alertness in obliging, his ready services, his gaiety, his intelligence, and his resource. From mending Master Hunt's crutch, down to rocking the cradle of Dame Green's baby—from fetching the water for the general wash, a labour which might have tried the strength of Hercules, down to leading out for his daily walk the half-blind, half-idiot, half-crazy David Hood, a task which would have worn out the patience of Job, nothing came amiss to him. All was performed with the same cheerful good-will; and the warm-hearted gratitude with which he received kindness was even more attaching than his readiness to perform good offices to others. I question if ever there were a happier childhood than that of the deserted parish-boy. Set aside the pugnaciousness which he possessed in common with other brave and generous animals, and which his protectress, the matron of the house, who had enjoyed in her youth the advantage of perusing some of those novels—now, alas! no more—where the heroes, originally foundlings, turn out to be lords and dukes in the last volume, used to quote in confirmation of her favourite

theory that he too would be found to be nobly born, as proofs of his innate high blood ; — set aside the foes made by his propensity to single combat, which could hardly fail to exasperate the defeated champions, and Stephen had not an enemy in the world.

At ten years of age, however, the love of independence, and the desire to try his fortunes in the world, began to stir in the spirited lad ; and his kind friend and confidant, the master's wife, readily promised her assistance to set him forth in search of adventures, though she was not a little scandalized to find his first step in life likely to lead him into a butcher's shop ; he having formed an acquaintance with a journeyman slayer of cattle in the neighbourhood, who had interceded with his master to take him on trial as errand-boy, with an understanding that if he showed industry and steadiness, and liked the craft, he might, on easy terms, be accepted as an apprentice. This prospect, which Stephen justly thought magnificent, shocked the lady of the workhouse, who had set her heart on his choosing a different scene of slaughter — killing men, not oxen — going forth as a soldier, turn-

ing the fate of a battle, marrying some king's daughter or emperor's niece, and returning in triumph to his native town, a generalissimo at the very least.

Her husband, however, and the parish-overseers were of a different opinion. They were much pleased with the proposal, and were (for overseers) really liberal in their manner of meeting it. So that a very few days saw Stephen in blue sleeves and a blue apron—the dress which he still loves best—parading through the streets of Belford, with a tray of meat upon his head, and a huge mastiff called Boxer—whose warlike name matched his warlike nature—following at his heels as if part and parcel of himself. A proud boy was Stephen on that first day of his promotion; and a still prouder, when, perched on a pony, long the object of his open admiration and his secret ambition, he carried out the orders to the country customers. His very basket danced for joy.*

Years wore away, and found the errand-boy

* Few things in a country life are more remarkable than the wild, triumphant, reckless speed with which a butcher's

transmuted into the apprentice, and the apprentice ripened into the journeyman, with no diminution of industry, intelligence, steadiness, and good-humour. As a young man of two or three and twenty, he was so remarkable for feats of strength and activity, for which his tall and athletic person, not at that period encumbered by flesh, particularly fitted him, as to be the

boy sweeps along the streets, and roads, and lanes, whether mounted, or in a rumbling, jolting cart, no accident ever happening, although it seems inevitable that the young gentleman must either kill, or be killed, (perhaps both,) every day of his life. How the urchins manage, Heaven knows!—but they do contrive to get horses on in a manner that professed jockeys would envy, and with an appearance of ease to the animal, and an evident enjoyment in the rider, which produce sympathy rather than indignation in the lookers-on. It is seldom that an affair of plain, sober, serious business, (and the bringing us our dinner does certainly belong to the most serious business of life,) is transacted with such overflowing delight—such gay, gallant, inexpressible good-humour.

The following anecdote (communicated by a friend) may serve to illustrate their peculiar dexterity in putting a steed on his mettle :—

A gentleman of fortune, residing in Berkshire, who prides himself very highly on the superiority of his horses, was greatly struck by the trotting of a roadster, belonging to a butcher in his neighbourhood. The owner, however, refused

champion of the town and neighbourhood ; and large bets have been laid and won on his sparing, and wrestling, and lifting weights all but incredible. He has walked to London and back (a distance of above sixty miles) against time, leaping in his way all the turnpike-gates that he found shut, without even laying his hand upon the bars. He has driven a flock of sheep against a shepherd by profession,

to part with the animal, till an offer of seventy guineas proved irresistible, and the gentleman mounted his prize in high glee. To his utter astonishment, however, the brute could not be prevailed upon to exceed an ordinary amble. Whip and spur were tried in vain. For weeks he persevered in the hopeless attempt, and at last he went in despair to the butcher, rating him in good set terms for having practised an imposition. " Lord bless you, sir," said the knight of the cleaver ; " he can trot as well as ever. Here, Tom," continued he, calling to his boy, " get on his back." The youngster was scarcely in the saddle, when off the pony shot like an arrow. " How the deuce is this ?" inquired the astonished purchaser. " Why, he will trot just as fast with you," returned the butcher, chuckling, "*only you must carry the basket !*"

I need hardly add, that the gentleman, not being able to comply with the condition, was forced to make the best bargain he could with the original proprietor of the steed—who, by the way, was not my good friend Stephen Lane.

and has rowed against a bargeman ; and all this without suffering these dangerous accomplishments to beguile him into the slightest deviation from his usual sobriety and good conduct. So that, when at six-and-twenty, he became, first, head man to Mr. Jackson, the great butcher in the Butts ; then married Mr. Jackson's only daughter ; then, on his father-in-law's death, succeeded to the business and a very considerable property ; and, finally, became one of the most substantial, respectable, and influential inhabitants of Belford,—every one felt that he most thoroughly deserved his good fortune : and although his prosperity has continued to increase with his years, and those who envied have seldom had the comfort of being called on to condole with him on calamities of any kind, yet, such is the power of his straightforward fair dealing, and his enlarged liberality, that his political adversaries, on the occasion of a contested election, or some such trial of power, are driven back to the workhouse and St. Stephen's lane, to his obscure and ignoble origin, (for the noble parents whom his poor old friend

used to prognosticate have never turned up,) to find materials for party malignity.

Prosperous, most prosperous, has Stephen Lane been through life; but by far the best part of his good fortune (setting pecuniary advantages quite out of the question) was his gaining the heart and hand of such a woman as Margaret Jackson. In her youth she was splendidly beautiful—of the luxuriant and gorgeous beauty in which Giorgione revelled; and now, in the autumn of her days, amplified, not like her husband, but so as to suit her matronly character, she seems to me almost as delightful to look upon as she could have been in her earliest spring. I do not know a prettier picture than to see her sitting at her own door, on a summer afternoon, surrounded by her children and her grand-children,—all of them handsome, gay, and cheerful,—with her knitting on her knee, and her sweet face beaming with benevolence and affection, smiling on all around, and seeming as if it were her sole desire to make every one about her as good and as happy as herself. One cause of the long endurance

of her beauty is undoubtedly its delightful expression. The sunshine and harmony of mind depicted in her countenance would have made plain features pleasing; and there was an intelligence, an enlargement of intellect, in the bright eyes and the fair expanded forehead, which mingled well with the sweetness that dimpled round her lips. Butcher's wife and butcher's daughter though she were, yet was she a graceful and gracious woman,—one of nature's gentlewomen in look and in thought. All her words were candid—all her actions liberal—all her pleasures unselfish—though, in her great pleasure of giving, I am not quite sure that she was so—she took such extreme delight in it. All the poor of the parish and of the town came to her as a matter of course—*that* is always the case with the eminently charitable; but children also applied to her for their little indulgences, as if by instinct. All the boys in the street used to come to her to supply their several desires; to lend them knives and give them string for kites, or pencils for drawing, or balls for cricket, as the matter might be. Those huge

pockets of hers were a perfect toy-shop, and so the urchins knew. And the little damsels, their sisters, came to her also for materials for doll's dresses, or odd bits of ribbon for pin-cushions, or coloured silks to embroider their needle-cases, or any of the thousand-and-one knick-knacks which young girls fancy they want. However out of the way the demand might seem, there was the article in Mrs. Lane's great pocket. She knew the tastes of her clients, and was never unprovided. And in the same ample receptacle, mixed with knives, and balls, and pencils for the boys, and doll's dresses, and sometimes even a doll itself, for the girls, might be found sugar-plums, and cakes, and apples, and gingerbread-nuts for the "toddling wee things," for whom even dolls have no charms. There was no limit to Mrs. Lane's bounty, or to the good-humoured alacrity with which she would interrupt a serious occupation to satisfy the claims of the small people. Oh, how they all loved Mrs. Lane!

Another and a very different class also loved the kind and generous inhabitant of the Butts

—the class who, having seen better days, are usually averse to accepting obligations from those whom they have been accustomed to regard as their inferiors. With them Mrs. Lane's delicacy was remarkable. Mrs. Lucas, the curate's widow, often found some unespoken luxury, a sweetbread, or so forth, added to her slender order; and Mr. Hughes, the consumptive young artist, could never manage to get his bill. Our good friend the butcher had his full share in the benevolence of these acts, but the manner of them belonged wholly to his wife.

Her delicacy, however, did not, fortunately for herself and for her husband, extend to her domestic habits. She was well content to live in the coarse plenty in which her father lived, and in which Stephen revelled; and by this assimilation of taste, she not only insured her own comfort, but preserved, unimpaired, her influence over his coarser but kindly and excellent disposition. It was, probably, to this influence that her children owed an education which, without raising them in the slightest degree above their station or their home, yet

followed the spirit of the age, and added considerable cultivation, and plain but useful knowledge, to the strong manly sense of their father, and her own sweet and sunny temperament. They are just what the children of such parents ought to be. The daughters, happily married in their own rank of life; the sons, each in his different line, following the footsteps of their father, and amassing large fortunes, not by paltry savings, or daring speculations, but by well-grounded and judicious calculation—by sound and liberal views—by sterling sense and downright honesty.

Universally as Mrs. Lane was beloved, Stephen had his enemies. He was a politician—a Reformer—a Radical, in those days in which reform was not so popular as it has been lately: he loved to descant on liberty, and economy, and retrenchment, and reform, and carried his theory into practice, in a way exceedingly inconvenient to the Tory member, whom he helped to oust; to the mayor and corporation, whom he watched as a cat watches a mouse, or as Mr. Hume watches the cabinet ministers;

and to all gas companies, and paving companies, and water companies, and contractors of every sort, whom he attacks as monopolisers and speculators, and twenty more long words with bad meanings, and torments out of their lives ;—for he is a terrible man in a public meeting, hath a loud, sonorous voice, excellent lungs, cares for nobody, and is quite entirely inaccessible to conviction, the finest of all qualities for your thorough-going partisan. All the Tories hated Mr. Lane.*

But the Tories latterly have formed but a small minority in Belford ; and amongst the Whigs and Radicals, or, to gather the two parties into one word, the Reformers, he was

* All women hate elections, and politics, and party collision of all sorts ; and so, especially at an election time, do I. But, after all, I believe we are wrong. The storm clears the air, and stirs the water, and keeps the lakes and pools from growing stagnant. Hatreds and enmities pass away, and people learn one of the great arts of life, one of the great secrets of happiness—to differ without bitterness, and to admit that two persons, both equally honest and independent, may conscientiously take directly opposite views of the same question. I am not sure that this was exactly Stephen Lane's notion ; but I think the world is coming gradually to such a conclusion.

decidedly popular—the leader of the opulent tradespeople both socially and politically. He it was—this denouncer of mayor's feasts and parish festivals—who, after the great contest, which his candidate gained by three, gave to the new member a dinner more magnificent, as he declared, than any he had ever seen or ever imagined—a dinner like the realization of an epicure's dream, or an embodying of some of the visions of the old dramatic poets, accompanied by wines so aristocratic, that they blushed to find themselves on a butcher's table. He was president of a smoking-club, and vice-president of half-a-dozen societies where utility and charity come in the shape of a good dinner; was a great man at a Smithfield cattle-show; an eminent looker-on at the bowling-green, which salutary exercise he patronised and promoted by sitting at an open window in a commodious smoking-room commanding the scene of action; and a capital performer of catches and glees.

He was musical, very did I not say so when talking of his youthful accomplishments?—playing by ear “with fingers like toes” (as

somebody said of Handel) both on the piano and the flute, and singing, in a fine bass voice, many of the old songs which are so eminently popular and national. His voice was loudest at church, giving body, as it were, to the voices of the rest of the congregation, and "God save the King" at the theatre would not have been worth hearing without Mr. Lane—he put his whole heart into it; for, with all his theoretical radicalism, the King—any one of the three kings in whose reign he hath flourished, for he did not reserve his loyalty for our present popular monarch, but bestowed it in full amplitude on his predecessors, the two last of the Georges—the King hath not a more loyal subject. He is a great patron of the drama, especially the comic drama, and likes no place better than the stage-box at the Belford theatre, a niche meant for six, which exactly fits him. All-fours is his favourite game, and Joe Miller his favourite author.

His retirement from business and from Belford occasioned a general astonishment and consternation. It was perfectly understood that

he could afford to retire from business as well as any tradesman who ever gave up a flourishing shop in that independent borough; but the busybodies, who take so unaccountable a pleasure in meddling with everybody's concerns, had long ago decided that he never would do so; and that he should abandon the good town at the very moment when the progress of the Reform Bill had completed his political triumphs—when the few adversaries who remained to the cause, as he was wont emphatically to term it, had not a foot to stand upon—did appear the most wonderful wonder of wonders that had occurred since the days of Katterfelto. Stephen Lane without Belford!—Belford, especially in its reformed state, without Stephen Lane, appeared as incredible as the announcements of the bottle-conjuror. Stephen Lane to abandon the great shop in the Butts! What other place would ever hold him? And to quit the scene of his triumphs too! to fly from the very field of victory!—the thing seemed impossible!

It was, however, amongst the impossibilities

that turn out true. Stephen Lane *did* leave the reformed borough, perhaps all the sooner because it *was* reformed, and his work was over—his occupation was gone. It is certain that, without perhaps exactly knowing his own feelings, our good butcher did feel the vacuum, the want of an exciting object, which often attends upon the fulfilment of a great hope. He also felt and understood better the entire cessation of opposition amongst his old enemies, the corporation party. “Dang it, they might ha’ shown fight, these corporationers! I thought Ben Bailey had had more bottom!” was his exclamation, after a borough-meeting which had passed off unanimously; and, scandalised at the pacific disposition of his adversaries, our puissant grazier turned his steps towards “fresh fields and pastures new.”

He did not move very far. Just over the border-line, which divides the parish of St. Stephen, in the loyal and independent borough of Belford, from the adjoining hamlet of Sunham—that is to say, exactly half a mile from the great shop in the Butts, did Mr. Lane take

up his abode, calling his suburban habitation, which was actually joined to the town by two rows of two-story houses, one of them fronted with poplars, and called Marvell Terrace, in compliment to the patriot of that name in Charles's days,—calling this *rus in urbe* of his “the country,” after the fashion of the inhabitants of Kensington and Hackney, and the other suburban villages which surround London proper; as if people who live in the midst of brick houses could have a right to the same rustic title with those who live amongst green fields. Compared to the Butts, however, Mr. Lane's new residence was almost rural; and the country he called it accordingly.

Retaining, however, his old town predilections, his large, square, commodious, and very ugly red house, with very white mouldings and window-frames, (red, so to say, picked out with white,) and embellished by a bright green door and a resplendent brass knocker, was placed close to the roadside—as close as possible; and the road happening to be that which led from the town of Belford to the little place

called London, he had the happiness of counting above sixty stage-coaches, which passed his door in the twenty-four hours, with vans, waggons, carts, and other vehicles in proportion; and of enjoying, not only from his commodious mansion, but also from the window of a smoking-room at the end of a long brick wall which parted his garden from the road, all the clatter, dust, and din of these several equipages—the noise being duly enhanced by there being, just opposite his smoking-room window, a public-house of great resort, where most of the coaches stopped to take up parcels and passengers, and where singing, drinking, and four-corners were going on all the day long.

One of his greatest pleasures in this retirement seems to be to bring all around him—wife, children, and grand-children—to the level of his own size, or that of his prize ox,—the expressions are nearly synonymous. The servant-lads have a chubby breadth of feature, like the stone heads, with wings under them (*soi-disant* cherubim), which one sees perched round old monuments; and the maids have

a broad, Dutch look, full and florid, like the women in Teniers' pictures. The very animals seem bursting with over-fatness: the great horse who draws his substantial equipage labours under the double weight of his master's flesh and his own; his cows look like stalled oxen; and the leash of large red greyhounds, on whose prowess and pedigree he prides himself, and whom he boasts, and vaunts, and brags of, and offers to bet upon, in the very spirit of the inimitable dialogue between Page and Shallow in the "Merry Wives of Windsor," could no more run a course in their present condition than they could fly,—the hares would stand and laugh at them.

Mr. Lane is certainly a very happy person; although, when first he removed from the Butts, it was quite the fashion to bestow a great deal of pity on the poor rich man, self-condemned to idleness,—which pity was as much thrown away as pity for those who have the power to follow their own devices generally is. Our good neighbour is not the man to be idle. Besides going every day to the old

shop, where his sons carry on the business, and he officiates *en amateur*, attending his old clubs, and pursuing his old diversions in Belford, he has his farm at Sunham to manage, (some five hundred acres of pasture and arable land, which he purchased with his new house,) and the whole parish to reform. He has already begun to institute inquiries into charity-schools and poor-rates, has an eye on the surveyor of highways, and a close watch on the overseer; he attends turnpike-meetings, and keeps a sharp look-out upon the tolls; and goes peeping about the workhouse with an anxiety to detect peculation that would do honour even to a Radical member of the reformed House of Commons.

Moreover, he hath a competitor worthy of his powers in the shape of the village orator, Mr. Jacob Jones, a little whipper-snapper of a gentleman farmer, with a shrill, cracked voice, and great activity of body, who, having had the advantage of studying some odds-and-ends of law, during a three years' residence in an attorney's office, has picked up

therein a competent portion of technical jargon, together with a prodigious volubility of tongue, and a comfortable stock of impudence ; and, under favour of these good gifts, hath led the village senate by the nose for the last dozen years. Now, Mr. Jacob Jones is, in his way, nearly as great a man as Mr. Lane ; rides his bit of blood a fox-hunting with my Lord ; dines once a-year with Sir John ; and advocates abuses through thick and thin—he does not well know why—almost as stoutly as our good knight of the cleaver does battle for reform. These two champions are to be pitted against each other at the next vestry-meeting, and much interest is excited as to the event of the contest. I, for my part, think that Mr. Lane will carry the day. He is, in every way, a man of more substance ; and Jacob Jones will no more be able to withstand “ the momentum of his republican fist,” than a soldier of light infantry could stand the charge of a heavy dragoon. Stephen, honest man, will certainly add to his other avocations that of overseer of Sunham. Much good may it do him !

WILLIAM AND HANNAH.

“DON’T talk to me, William, of our having been asked in church. Don’t imagine that I mind what people may say about that. Let them attend to their own concerns, and leave me to manage mine. If this were our wedding morning, and I were within half an hour of being your wedded wife, I would part from you as readily as I throw away this rose-leaf, if I were to know for certain what I have heard to-day. Were you or were you not three times tipsy last week, at that most riotous and disorderly house, ‘The Eight Bells?’”

This searching question was put by the young and blooming Hannah Rowe, a nursery-maid in the family of General Maynard, of Oakley Manor, to her accepted lover, William Curtis, a very fine young man, who followed

his trade of a shoemaker in the good town of Belford. The courtship had, as the fair damsel's words implied, approached as nearly as well could be to the point matrimonial; Hannah having given her good mistress warning, and prepared her simple wardrobe; and William, on his part, having taken and furnished a room—for to a whole house neither of them aspired—near his master's shop: William, although a clever workman, and likely to do well, being as yet only a journeyman.

A finer couple it would be difficult to meet with anywhere, than William and his Hannah. He was tall, handsome, and intelligent, with a perpetual spring of good-humour, and a fund of that great gift of Heaven, high animal spirits, which being sustained by equal life of mind, (for otherwise it is not a good gift,) rendered him universally popular. She had a rich, sparkling, animated beauty—a warmth of manner and of feeling equally prepossessing. She loved William dearly, and William knew it. Perhaps he did not equally know that her quickness of temper was accompanied by a

decision and firmness of character, which on any really essential point would not fail to put forth its strength. Such a point was this, as Hannah knew from woful experience: for her own father had been a frequenter of the alehouse—had ruined himself altogether, health, property, and character, by that degrading and ruinous propensity, and had finally died of sheer drunkenness, leaving her mother a broken-hearted woman, and herself a child of eight years old, to struggle as best they might through the wide world. Well did Hannah remember her dear mother, and that dear mother's sufferings;—how she would sit night after night awaiting the return of her brutal husband, bending silently and patiently over the needlework by which she endeavoured to support herself and her child; and how, when he did return, when his reeling unsteady step was heard on the pavement, or his loud knock at the door, or the horrid laugh and frightful oath of intoxication in the street, how the poor wife would start and tremble, and strive to mould her quivering lips into a smile, and

struggle against her tears, as he called fiercely for comforts which she had not to give, and thundered forth imprecations on herself and her harmless child. Once she remembered — she could not have been above five years old at the time, but she remembered it as if it had happened yesterday — awaking suddenly from sleep on her wretched bed, and seeing, by the dim moonlight that came in through the broken windows, her father in his drunken frenzy standing over her and threatening to strangle her, whilst her mother, frantic with fear, tore him away, and had her arm broken in the struggle. This scene, and scenes like this, passed through Hannah's mind, as she leant over the calm face of Mrs. Maynard's lovely infant who lay sleeping on her lap, and repeated in a low calm voice her former question to William — “Were you not three times tipsy last week?”

“Now, Hannah!” replied William, evasively, “how can you be so cross and old-maidish? If I did get a little merry, what was it but a

joyful parting from bachelor friends before beginning a steady married life? What do you women know of such things? What can you know? and what can a young fellow do with himself when his work is over, if he is not to go to a public-house? We have not work now for above half a day—that is to say, not more work in a week than I could finish in three days; and what, I should like to know, am I to do with the remainder? At the Eight Bells, say what you like of the place, there's good liquor and good company, a good fire in winter, a newspaper to read, and the news of the town to talk over. Does not your master himself go to his club every night of his life when he's in London? And what—since you won't let me come above twice a-week to see you—what would you have me do with the long evenings when *my* work is over?"

Hannah was a little posed at this question. Luckily, however, a present sent to her mistress by an old servant who had married a gardener, consisting of a fine basket of straw-

berries, another of peas, and a beautiful nosegay of pinks and roses, caught her eye as they lay on the table before her.

“Why not take a little plot of ground, and work in that of evenings, and raise vegetables and flowers? Anything rather than the public-house!”

William laughed outright.

“Where am I to get this plot of ground? tell me that, Hannah! You know that at present I am lodging with my aunt in Silver-street, who has only a little bricked yard; and when we move to our room in Newton-row, why the outlet there will not be so large as that table. This is all nonsense, as you well know. I am no gardener, but a merry shoemaker; and such as I am you have chosen me, and you must take me.”

“And you will not promise to give up the Eight Bells?” asked Hannah, imploringly.

“Promise—no—” hesitated William. “I dare say I should do as you like; but as to promising—it is *you* who have promised to take me ‘for better for worse,’” added he, ten-

derly: "surely you do not mean to deceive me?"

"Oh, William!" said Hannah, "it is you who would deceive me and yourself. I know what the public-house leads to; and suffer what I may, better suffer now and alone, than run the risk of *that* misery. Either promise to give up the Eight Bells, or, dearly as I love you, and far as things have gone, we must part," added she, firmly.

And as William, though petitioning, remonstrating, coaxing, storming, and imploring, would not give the required pledge, part they did; his last speech denouncing a vengeance which she could ill bear.

"You will repent this, Hannah! for you have been the ruin of me. You have broken my heart; and if you hear of me every night at the alehouse, endeavouring to drown care, remember that it is you, and you only, who have driven me there!" And so saying, he walked sturdily out of the house.

William went away in wrath and anger, determined to be as good, or rather as bad, as his

word. Hannah remained, her heart overflowing with all the blended and contending emotions natural to a woman (I mean a woman that has a heart) in such a situation. Something of temper had mingled with the prudence of her resolution, and, as is always the case where a rash and hasty temper has led a generous mind astray, the reaction was proportionably strong. She blamed herself—she pitied William—she burst into a passion of tears; and it was not until the violence of her grief had awakened and terrified the little Emily, and that the necessity of pacifying the astonished child compelled her into the exertion of calming herself, (so salutary in almost all cases is the recurrence of our daily duties!) that she remembered the real danger of William's unhappy propensity, the dying injunctions of her mother, and those fearful scenes of her own childhood which still at times haunted her dreams. Her father, she had heard, had once been as kind, as gay, as engaging as William himself—as fond of her mother as William was of her. Where was the security that these qualities would not perish

under the same evil influence and degrading habits? Her good mistress, too, praised and encouraged her, and for a while she was comforted.

Very, very soon the old feeling returned. Hannah had loved with the full and overflowing affection of a fond and faithful nature, and time and absence, which seldom fail to sweep away a slight and trivial fancy, only gave deeper root to an attachment like hers: her very heart clung to William. Her hours were passed in weaving visions of imaginary interviews, and framing to herself imaginary letters. She loved to plan fancied dialogues—to think how fondly he would woo, and how firmly she would reject,—for she thought it quite sure that she should reject; and yet she yearned (oh, how she yearned!) for the opportunity of accepting.

But such opportunity was far away. The first thing she heard of him was, that he was realizing his own prediction by pursuing a course of continued intemperance at the Eight Bells; the next, that he was married!—married, it should

seem, from hate and anger, not from love, to a young thoughtless girl, portionless and improvident as himself. Nothing but misery could ensue from such a union;—nothing but misery did. Then came the beer-houses, with their fearful addition of temptation; and Hannah, broken-hearted at the accounts of his evil courses, and ashamed of the interest which she still continued to feel for one who could never be anything to her again, rejoiced when General and Mrs. Maynard resolved to spend some time in Germany, and determined that she should accompany them.

From Germany the travellers proceeded to Italy, from Italy to Switzerland, and from Switzerland to France; so that nearly five years elapsed before they returned to Oakley Manor. Five years had wrought the usual changes amongst Hannah's old friends in that neighbourhood. The servants were nearly all new, the woman at the lodge had gone away, the keeper's daughter was married; so that, finding none who knew her anxiety respecting William, and dreading to provoke the answer

which she feared awaited her inquiries, she forbore to ask any question respecting her former lover.

One evening, soon after their arrival, General Maynard invited his wife and family to go and see the cottage-gardens at Belford. "We'll take even little Emily and Hannah," added he, "for it's a sight to do one's heart good—ay, fifty times more good than famous rivers and great mountains! and I would not have any of my children miss it for the fee-simple of the land, which, by the bye, happens to belong to me. You remember my friend Howard writing to me when I was at Manheim, desiring to rent about thirty acres near Belford, which had just fallen vacant. Well, he has fenced it, and drained it, and made roads and paths, and divided it into plots of a quarter of an acre, more or less, and let it out, for exactly the same money which he gives me, to the poor families in the town, chiefly to the inhabitants of that wretched suburb Silver-street, where the miserable hovels had not an inch of outlet, and the children were constantly grovelling in the

mud and running under the horses' feet, passing their whole days in increasing and progressive demoralization; whilst their mothers were scolding and quarrelling and starving, and their fathers drowning their miseries at the beer-shops—a realization of Crabbe's gloomiest pictures! Only imagine what these gardens have done for these poor people! Every spare hour of the parents is given to the raising of vegetables for their own consumption, or for sale, or for the rearing and fattening that prime luxury of the English peasant, a pig. The children have healthy and pleasant employment. The artisan who can only find work for two or three days in the week is saved from the parish; he who has full pay is saved from the ale-house. A feeling of independence is generated, and the poor man's heart is gladdened and warmed by the conscious pride of property in the soil—by knowing and feeling that the spring shower and the summer sun are swelling and ripening his little harvest.

“I speak ardently,” continued the General, rather ashamed of his own enthusiasm; “but I've

just been talking with that noble fellow Howard, who in the midst of his many avocations has found time for all this, and really I cannot help it. Whilst I was with him, in came one of the good folks to complain that his garden was rated. ‘I’m glad of it,’ replied Howard; ‘it’s a proof that you are a real tenant, and that this is not a charity affair.’ And the man went off an inch taller. Howard confesses that he has not been able to resist the temptation of giving them back the amount of the rent in tools and rewards of one sort or other. He acknowledges that this is the weak part of his undertaking; but, as I said just now, he could not help it. Moreover, I doubt if the giving back the rent in that form be wrong,—at least, if it be wrong to give it back at first. The working-classes are apt to be suspicious of their superiors—I am afraid that they have sometimes had reason to be so; and as the benefits of the system cannot be immediately experienced, it is well to throw in these little boons to stimulate them to perseverance. But here we are at Mr. Howard’s,” pursued the good

General, as the carriage stopped at the gate of the brewery; for that admirable person was neither more nor less than a country brewer.

A beautiful place was that old-fashioned brewery, situated on an airy bit of rising ground at the outskirts of the town, the very last house in the borough, and divided from all other buildings by noble rows of elms, by its own spacious territory of orchard and meadow, and by the ample outlet, full of drays, and carts, and casks, and men, and horses, and all the life and motion of a great and flourishing business; forming, by its extent and verdure, so striking a contrast to the usual dense and smoky atmosphere, the gloomy yet crowded appearance of a brewer's yard.

The dwelling-house, a most picturesque erection, with one end projecting so as to form two sides of a square, the date 1642 on the porch, and the whole front covered with choice creepers, stood at some distance from the road; and General Maynard and his lady hurried through it, as if knowing instinctively that on a fine

summer evening Mrs. Howard's flower-garden was her drawing-room. What a flower-garden it was! A sunny turfy knoll sloping abruptly to a natural and never-failing spring, that divided it from a meadow rising on the other side with nearly equal abruptness; the steep descent dotted with flower-beds, rich, bright, fresh, and glowing, and the path that wound up the hill leading through a narrow stone gateway—an irregular arch overrun with luxuriant masses of the narrow-leaved, white-veined ivy, which trailed its long pendant strings almost to the ground into a dark and shadowy walk, running along the top of a wild precipitous bank, clothed partly with forest-trees, oak, and elm, and poplar—partly with the finest exotics, cedars, cypresses, and the rare and graceful snowdrop-tree, of such growth and beauty as are seldom seen in England,—and terminated by a root-house overhung by the branches of an immense acacia, now in the full glory of its white and fragrant blossoms, and so completely concealing all but the entrance of the old root-house, that it seemed as if that quiet retreat had no other

roof than those bright leaves and chain-like flowers.

Here they found Mrs. Howard, a sweet and smiling woman, lovelier in the rich glow of her matronly beauty than she had been a dozen years before as the fair Jane Dorset, the belle of the country side. Here sat Mrs. Howard, surrounded by a band of laughing rosy children; and directed by her, and promising to return to the brewery to coffee, the General and his family proceeded by a private path to the cottage allotments.

Pleasant was the sight of those allotments to the right-minded and the kind, who love to contemplate order and regularity in the moral and physical world, and the cheerful and willing exertion of a well-directed and prosperous industry. It was a beautiful evening late in June, and the tenants and their families were nearly all assembled in their small territories, each of which was literally filled with useful vegetables in every variety and of every kind. Here was a little girl weeding an onion-bed, here a boy sticking French beans;

here a woman gathering herbs for a salad, here a man standing in proud and happy contemplation of a superb plot of cauliflowers. Everywhere there was a hum of cheerful voices, as neighbour greeted neighbour, or the several families chatted amongst each other.

The General, who was warmly interested in the subject, and had just made himself master of the details, pointed out to Mrs. Maynard those persons to whom it had been most beneficial. "That man," said he, "who has, as you perceive, a double allotment, and who is digging with so much good-will, has ten children and a sickly wife, and yet has never been upon the parish for the last two years. That thin young man in the blue jacket is an outdoor painter, and has been out of work these six weeks—(by the bye, Howard has just given him a job)—and all that time has been kept by his garden. And that fine-looking fellow who is filling a basket with peas, whilst the pretty little child at his side is gathering strawberries, is the one whom Howard prizes most, because he is a person of higher qualities—one who

was redeemed from intolerable drunkenness, retrieved from sin and misery, by this occupation. He is a journeyman-shoemaker—a young widower——”

Hannah heard no more —she had caught sight of William, and William had caught sight of her; and in an instant her hands were clasped in his, and they were gazing on each other with eyes full of love and joy, and of the blessed tears of a true and perfect reconciliation.

“Yes, Hannah!” said William, “I have sinned, and deeply; but I have suffered bitterly, and most earnestly have I repented. It is now eighteen months since I have entered a public-house, and never will I set foot in one again. Do you believe me, Hannah?”

“Do I!” exclaimed Hannah, with a fresh burst of tears; “oh, what should I be made of if I did not?”

“And here are the peas and the strawberries,” said William, smiling; “and the pinks and the roses,” added he, more tenderly, taking a nosegay from his lovely little girl, as Hannah stooped to caress her; “and the poor mother-

less child—my only child ! she has no mother, Hannah—will you be one to her ?”

“ Will I !” again echoed Hannah ; “ oh, William, will I not ?”

“ Remember, I am still only a poor journeyman—I have no money,” said William.

“ But I have,” replied Hannah.

“ And shall we not bless Mr. Howard,” continued he, as with his own Hannah on his arm, and his little girl holding by his hand, he followed Mrs. Maynard and the General,—“ shall we not bless Mr. Howard, who rescued me from idleness and its besetting temptations, and gave me pleasant and profitable employment in the cottage-garden ?”



Note. — The system on which the above story is founded, is happily no fiction ; and although generally appropriated to the agricultural labourer of the rural districts, it has, in more than one instance, been tried with eminent success amongst the poorer artisans in towns—to whom, above all other classes, the power of emerging from the (in every sense)

polluted atmosphere of their crowded lanes and courts must be invaluable.

The origin of the system is so little known, and seems to me at once so striking and so natural, that I cannot resist the temptation of relating it almost in the words in which it was told to me by one of the most strenuous and judicious supporters of the cottage allotments.

John Denson was a poor working man, an agricultural labourer, a peasant, who, finding his weekly wages inadequate to the support of his family, and shrinking from applying for relief to the parish, sought and obtained of the lord of the manor the permission to enclose a small plot of waste land, of which the value had hitherto been very trifling. By diligent cultivation he brought it to a state of great productiveness and fertility. This was afterwards sufficiently extended to enable him to keep a cow or two, to support his family in comfort and independence, and ultimately to purchase the fee-simple of the land. During the hours of relaxation, he educated himself sufficiently to enable him to relate clearly and

correctly the result of his experience; and feeling it his duty to endeavour to improve the condition of his fellow-labourers, by informing them of the advantages which he had derived from industrious and sober habits, and the cultivation of a small plot of ground, he published a pamphlet called "The Peasant's Warning Voice," which, by attracting the attention of persons of humanity and influence, gave the first impulse to the system.

Amongst the earliest and most zealous of its supporters was Lord Braybrooke, to whom, next after John Denson, (for that noble-minded peasant must always claim the first place,) belongs the honour of promulgating extensively a plan replete with humanity and wisdom.

It was first carried into effect by his Lordship, several years ago, in the parish of Saffron Walden, a place then remarkable for misery and vice, but which is now conspicuous for the prosperity and good conduct of its poorer inhabitants. The paupers on the rates were very numerous, (amounting, I believe, to 135,) and

are now comparatively few, and—which is of far more importance, since the reduction of the poor-rates is merely an incidental consequence of the system—the cases of crime at the Quarter Sessions have diminished in a similar proportion.

Since that period, the cottage allotments have been tried in many parts of England, and always with success. Indeed, they can hardly fail, provided the soil be favourable to spade-husbandry, the rent not higher than that which would be demanded from a large occupier of land, the ground properly drained and fenced, and the labourers not encumbered with rules and regulations: for the main object being not merely to add to the physical comforts, but to raise the moral character of the working-classes, especial care should be taken to induce and cherish the feeling of independence, and to prove to them that they are considered as tenants paying rent, and not as almsmen receiving charity.

I am happy to add, that the Mr. Howard of this little story (that is not *quite* his name) does actu-

ally exist. He is a an eminent brewer in a small town in our neighbourhood, and has also another great brewery near London; he has a large family of young children and orphan relations, is an active magistrate, a sportsman, a horticulturist, a musician, a cricketer; is celebrated for the most extensive and the most elegant hospitality; and yet, has found time, not only to establish the system in his own parish, but also to officiate as secretary to a society for the promotion of this good object throughout the county. Heaven grant it success! I, for my poor part, am thoroughly convinced, that if ever project were at once benevolent and rational, and practicable, and wise, it is this of the cottage allotments; and I can hardly refrain from entreating my readers—especially my fair readers—to exert whatever power or influence they may possess in favour of a cause which has for its sole aim and end, the putting down of vice and misery, and the diffusion of happiness and virtue.

THE CURATE OF ST. NICHOLAS'.

AMONGST the most generally beloved, not merely of the clergy, but of the whole population of Belford, as that population stood some thirty years ago, was my good old friend the Curate of St. Nicholas'; and, in my mind, he had qualities that might both explain and justify his universal popularity.

Belford is at present singularly fortunate in the parochial clergy. Of the two vicars, whom I have the honour and the privilege of knowing, one confers upon the place the ennobling distinction of being the residence of a great poet; whilst both are not only, in the highest sense of that highest word, gentlemen, in birth, in education, in manners, and in mind—but eminently popular in the pulpit, and, as parish priests, not to be excelled,

even amongst the generally excellent clergymen of the Church of England—a phrase, by the way, which just at this moment sounds so like a war-cry, that I cannot too quickly disclaim any intention of inflicting a political dissertation on the unwary reader. My design is simply to draw a faithful likeness of one of the most peaceable members of the establishment.

Of late years, there has been a prodigious change in the body clerical. The activity of the dissenters, the spread of education, and the immense increase of population, to say nothing of that “word of power,” Reform, have combined to produce a stirring spirit of emulation amongst the younger clergy, which has quite changed the aspect of the profession. Heretofore, the “church militant” was the quietest and easiest of all vocations; and the most slender and lady-like young gentleman, the “mamma’s darling” of a great family, whose lungs were too tender for the bar, and whose frame was too delicate for the army, might be sent with

perfect comfort to the snug curacy of a neighbouring parish, to read Horace, cultivate auriculas, christen, marry, and bury, about twice a quarter, and do duty once every Sunday. Now times are altered; prayers must be read and sermons preached twice a day at least, not forgetting lectures in Lent, and homilies at tide times; workhouses are to be visited; schools attended, boys and girls taught in the morning, and grown-up bumpkins in the evening; children are to be catechised; masters and mistresses looked after; hymn-books distributed; bibles given away; tract societies fostered amongst the zealous, and psalmody cultivated amongst the musical. In short, a curate, now-a-days, even a country curate, much more if his parish lie in a great town, has need of the lungs of a barrister in good practice, and the strength and activity of an officer of dragoons.

Now this is just as it ought to be. Nevertheless, I cannot help entertaining certain relentings in favour of the well-endowed churchman of the old school, round, indolent, and

rubicund, at peace with himself and with all around him, who lives in quiet and plenty in his ample parsonage-house, dispensing with a liberal hand the superfluities of his hospitable table, regular and exact in his conduct, but not so precise as to refuse a Saturday night's rubber in his own person, or to condemn his parishioners for their game of cricket on Sunday afternoons; charitable in word and deed, tolerant, indulgent, kind, to the widest extent of that widest word; but, except in such wisdom (and it is of the best), no wiser than that eminent member of the church, Parson Adams. In a word, exactly such a man as my good old friend the rector of Hadley, *ci-devant* curate of St. Nicholas' in Belford, who has just passed the window in that venerable relique of antiquity, his one-horse chaise. Ah, we may see him still, through the budding leaves of the clustering China rose, as he is stopping to give a penny to poor lame Dinah Moore—stopping, and stooping his short round person with no small effort, that he may put it into her little hand, because the child would

have some difficulty in picking it up, on account of her crutches. Yes, there he goes, rotund and rosy, “a tun of a man,” filling three parts of his roomy equipage; the shovel-hat with a rose in it, the very model of orthodoxy, overshadowing his white hairs and placid countenance; his little stunted foot-boy in a purple livery, driving a coach-horse as fat as his master; whilst the old white terrier, fatter still—his pet terrier Venom, waddles after the chaise (of which the head is let down, in honour, I presume, of this bright April morning), much resembling in gait and aspect that other white waddling thing, a goose, if a goose were gifted with four legs.

There he goes, my venerable friend the Reverend Josiah Singleton, rector of Hadley-cum-Doveton, in the county of Southampton, and vicar of Delworth, in the county of Surrey. There he goes, in whose youth tract societies and adult schools *were not*, but who yet has done as much good and as little harm in his generation, has formed as just and as useful a link between the rich and the poor, the

landlord and the peasant, as ever did honour to religion and to human nature. Perhaps this is only saying, in other words, that, under any system, benevolence and single-mindedness will produce their proper effects.

I am not, however, going to preach a sermon over my worthy friend—long may it be before his funeral sermon is preached! or even to write his *éloge*, for *éloges* are dull things; and to sit down with the intention of being dull,—to set about the matter with malice prepense (howbeit the calamity may sometimes happen accidentally), I hold to be an unnecessary impertinence. I am only to give a slight sketch, a sort of bird's-eye view of my reverend friend's life, which, by the way, has been, except in one single particular, so barren of incidents, that it might almost pass for one of those proverbially uneventful narratives, *The Lives of the Poets*.

Fifty-six years ago, our portly rector—then, it may be presumed, a sleek and comely bachelor—left college, where he had passed through his examinations and taken his de-

grees with respectable mediocrity, and was ordained to the curacy of St. Nicholas' parish, in our market-town of Belford, where, by the recommendation of his vicar, Dr. Grampound, he fixed himself in the small but neat first-floor of a reduced widow gentlewoman, who endeavoured to eke out a small annuity by letting lodgings at eight shillings a-week, linen, china, plate, glass, and waiting included, and by keeping a toy-shop, of which the whole stock, fiddles, drums, balls, dolls, and shuttle-cocks, might be safely appraised at under eight pounds, including a stately rocking-horse, the poor widow's *cheval de bataille*, which had occupied one side of Mrs. Martin's shop from the time of her setting up in business, and still continued to keep his station uncheapened by her thrifty customers.

There, by the advice of Dr. Grampound, did he place himself on his arrival at Belford ; and there he continued for full thirty years, occupying the same first-floor ; the sitting-room—a pleasant apartment, with one window (for the little toy-shop was a corner-house) abutting

on the High Bridge, and the other on the market-place—still, as at first, furnished with a Scotch carpet, cane chairs, a Pembroke table, and two hanging shelves, which seemed placed there less for their ostensible destination of holding books, sermons, and newspapers, than for the purpose of bobbing against the head of every unwary person who might happen to sit down near the wall; and the small chamber behind, with its tent-bed and dimity furniture, its mahogany chest of drawers, one chair and no table; with the self-same spare, quiet, decent landlady, in her faded but well-preserved mourning gown, and the identical serving maiden, Patty, a demure, civil, modest damsel, dwarfed as it should seem by constant curtsying, since from twelve years upwards she had not grown an inch. Except the clock of time, which, however imperceptibly, does still keep moving, everything about the little toy-shop in the market-place at Belford was at a stand-still. The very tabby cat which lay basking on the hearth, might have passed for his progenitor of happy memory, who took

his station there the night of Mr. Singleton's arrival; and the self-same hobby-horse still stood rocking opposite the counter, the admiration of every urchin who passed the door, and so completely the pride of the mistress of the domicile, that it is to be questioned—convenient as thirty shillings, lawful money of Great Britain, might sometimes have proved to Mrs. Martin—whether she would not have felt more reluctance than pleasure in parting with this, the prime ornament of her stock.

There, however, the rocking-horse remained; and there remained Mr. Singleton, gradually advancing from a personable youth to a portly middle-aged man; and obscure and untempting as the station of a curate in a country-town may appear, it is doubtful whether those thirty years of comparative poverty were not amongst the happiest of his easy and tranquil life.

Very happy they undoubtedly were. To say nothing of the comforts provided for him by his assiduous landlady and her civil domestic, both of whom felt all the value of their

kind, orderly, and considerate inmate; especially as compared with the racketty recruiting officers and troublesome single gentlewomen who had generally occupied the first-floor; our curate was in prime favour with his vicar, Dr. Grampound, a stately pillar of divinity, rigidly orthodox in all matters of church and state, who having a stall in a distant cathedral, and another living by the sea-side, spent but little of his time at Belford, and had been so tormented by his three last curates—the first of whom was avowedly of whig politics, and more than suspected of Calvinistic religion; the second a fox-hunter, and the third a poet—that he was delighted to intrust his flock to a staid, sober youth of high-church and tory principles, who never mounted a horse in his life, and would hardly have trusted himself on Mrs. Martin's steed of wood; and whose genius, so far from carrying him into any flights of poesy, never went beyond that weekly process of sermon-making which, as the doctor observed, was all that a sound divine need know of authorship. Never was curate a

greater favourite with his principal. He has even been heard to prophesy that the young man would be a bishop.

Amongst the parishioners, high and low, Josiah was no less a favourite. The poor felt his benevolence, his integrity, his piety, and his steady kindness; whilst the richer classes (for in the good town of Belford few were absolutely rich) were won by his unaffected good-nature, the most popular of all qualities. There was nothing shining about the man, no danger of his setting the Thames on fire, and the gentlemen liked him none the worse for that; but his chief friends and allies were the ladies—not the young ladies, (by whom, to say the truth, he was not so much courted, and whom, in return, he did not trouble himself to court,) but the discreet mammas and grand-mammas, and maiden gentlewomen of a certain age, amongst whom he found himself considerably more valued and infinitely more at home.

Sooth to say, our staid, worthy, prudent, sober young man, had at no time of his life been

endowed with the buoyant and mercurial spirit peculiar to youth. There was in him a considerable analogy between the mind and the body. Both were heavy, sluggish, and slow. He was no strait-laced person either; he liked a joke in his own quiet way well enough; but as to encountering the quips, and cranks, and quiddities of a set of giddy girls, he could as soon have danced a cotillon. The gift was not in him. So with a wise instinct he stuck to their elders; called on them in the morning; drank tea with them at night; played whist, quadrille, cassino, backgammon, commerce, or lottery-tickets, as the party might require; told news and talked scandal as well as any woman of them all; accommodated a difference of four years' standing between the wife of the chief attorney and the sister of the principal physician; and was appealed to as absolute referee in a question of precedence between the widow of a post-captain and the lady of a colonel of volunteers, which had divided the whole gentility of the town into parties. In short, he was such a favourite in the female world, that when

the ladies of Belford (on their husbands setting up a weekly card-club at the Crown) resolved to meet on the same night at each other's houses, Mr. Singleton was, by unanimous consent, the only gentleman admitted to the female coterie.

Happier man could hardly be, than the worthy Josiah in this fair company. At first, indeed, some slight interruptions to his comfort had offered themselves, in the shape of overtures matrimonial, from three mammas, two papas, one uncle, and (I grieve to say) one lady, an elderly young lady, a sort of dowager spinster in her own proper person, who, smitten with Mr. Singleton's excellent character, a small independence, besides his curacy in possession, and a trifling estate (much exaggerated by the gossip fame) in expectancy, and perhaps somewhat swayed by Dr. Grampound's magnificent prophecy, had, at the commencement of his career, respectively given him to understand that he might, if he chose, become more nearly related to them. This is a sort of dilemma which a well-bred man, and a man of hu-

manity, (and our curate was both,) usually feels to be tolerably embarrassing. Josiah, however, extricated himself with his usual straightforward simplicity. He said, and said truly, "that he considered matrimony a great comfort—that he had a respect for the state, and no disinclination to any of the ladies; but that he was a poor man, and could not afford so expensive a luxury." And with the exception of one mamma, who had nine unmarried daughters, and proposed waiting for a living, and the old young lady who had offered herself, and who kept her bed and threatened to die on his refusal, thus giving him the fright of having to bury his inamorata, and being haunted by her ghost—with these slight exceptions, everybody took his answer in good part.

As he advanced in life, these sort of annoyances ceased—his staid sober deportment, ruddy countenance and portly person, giving him an air of being even older than he really was; so that he came to be considered as that privileged person, a confirmed old bachelor, the general beau of the female coterie, and the favourite

marryer and christener of the town and neighbourhood. Nay, as years wore away, and he began to marry some whom he had christened, and to bury many whom he had married, even Dr. Grampound's prophecy ceased to be remembered, and he appeared to be as firmly rooted in Belford as St. Nicholas's church, and as completely fixed in the toy-shop as the rocking-horse.

Destiny, however, had other things in store for him. The good town of Belford, as I have already hinted, is, to its own misfortune, a poor place! an independent borough, and subject, accordingly, to the infliction (privilege, I believe, the voters are pleased to call it) of an election. For thirty years—during which period there had been seven or eight of these visitations—the calamity had passed over so mildly, that, except three or four days of intolerable drunkenness, (accompanied, of course, by a sufficient number of broken heads,) no other mischief had occurred; the two great families, whig and tory, who might be said to divide the town—for this was before the days of that active reformer

Stephen Lane — having entered, by agreement, into a compromise to return one member each ; a compact which might have held good to this time, had not some slackness of attention on the part of the whigs (the Blues, as they were called in election jargon) provoked the Yellow or tory part of the corporation, to sign a requisition to the Hon. Mr. Delworth, to stand as their second candidate, and produced the novelty of a sharp contest in their hitherto peaceful borough. When it came, it came with a vengeance. It lasted eight days—as long as it could last. The dregs of that cup of evil were drained to the very bottom. Words are faint to describe the tumult, the turmoil, the blustering, the brawling, the abuse, the ill-will, the battles by tongue and by fist, of that disastrous time. At last the Yellows carried it by six ; and on a petition and scrutiny in the House of Commons, by one single vote : and as Mr. Singleton had been engaged on the side of the winning party, not merely by his own political opinions, and those of his ancient vicar, Dr. Grampound, but also by the predilections of his female allies, who

were Yellows to a man, those who understood the ordinary course of such matters were not greatly astonished, in the course of the ensuing three years, to find our good curate, rector of Hadley, vicar of Delworth, and chaplain to the new member's father. One thing, however, was remarkable, that, amidst all the scurrility and ill blood of an election contest, and in spite of the envy which is pretty sure to follow a sudden change of fortune, Mr. Singleton neither made an enemy nor lost a friend. His peaceful unoffending character disarmed offence. He had been unexpectedly useful too to the winning party, not merely by knowing and having served many of the poorer voters, but by possessing one eminent qualification not sufficiently valued or demanded in a canvasser: he was the best listener of the party,* and is said to have gained the half-dozen votes which decided

* A friend of mine, the lady of a borough member, who was very active in canvassing for her husband, once said to me, on my complimenting her on the number of votes she had obtained: "It was all done by listening. Our good friends the voters like to hear themselves talk."

the election by the mere process of letting the people talk.

This talent, which, it is to be presumed, he acquired in the ladies' club at Belford, and which probably contributed to his popularity in that society, stood him in great stead in the aristocratic circle of Delworth Castle. The whole family was equally delighted and amused by his *bonhomie* and simplicity; and he in return, captivated by their kindness, as well as grateful for their benefits, paid them a sincere and unfeigned homage, which trebled their good-will. Never was so honest and artless a courtier. There was something at once diverting and amiable in the ascendancy which everything connected with his patron held over Mr. Singleton's imagination. Loyal subject as he unquestionably was, the king, queen, and royal family would have been as nothing in his eyes, compared with Lord and Lady Delworth and their illustrious offspring. He purchased a new peerage, which in the course of a few days opened involuntarily on the honoured page which contained an account of their genealogy;

his walls were hung with ground-plans of Hadley House, elevations of Delworth Castle, maps of the estate, prints of the late and present lords, and of a judge of Queen Anne's reign, and of a bishop of George the Second's, worthies of the family ; he had, on his dining-room mantel-piece, models of two wings, once projected for Hadley, but which had never been built ; and is said to have once bought an old head of the first Duke of Marlborough, which a cunning auctioneer had fobbed off upon him, by pretending that the great captain was a progenitor of his noble patron.

Besides this predominant taste, he soon began to indulge other inclinations at the rectory, which savoured a little of his old bachelor habits. He became a collector of shells and china, and a fancier of tulips ; and when he invited the coterie of Belford ladies to partake of a syllabub, astonished and delighted them by the performance of a piping bull-finch of his own teaching, who executed the Blue Bells of Scotland in a manner not to be surpassed by the barrel organ, by means of which this

accomplished bird had been instructed. He engaged Mrs. Martin as his housekeeper, and Patty as his housemaid; set up the identical one-horse-chaise in which he was riding to-day; became a member of the clerical dinner club; took in the St. James's Chronicle and the Gentleman's Magazine; and was set down by every body as a confirmed old bachelor.

All these indications notwithstanding, nothing was less in his contemplation than to remain in that forlorn condition. Marriage, after all, was his predominant taste; his real fancy was for the ladies. He was fifty-seven, or thereabouts, when he began to make love; but he has amply made up for his loss of time, by marrying no less than four wives since that period. Call him Mr. Singleton indeed!—why, his proper name would be Doubleton. Four wives has he had, and of all varieties. His first was a pretty rosy smiling lass just come from school, who had known him all her life, and seemed to look upon him just as a school-girl does upon an indulgent grandpapa, who comes to fetch her home for the holidays. She was as happy as a

bird, poor thing! during the three months she lived with him—but then came a violent fever and carried her off.

His next wife was a pale, sickly, consumptive lady, not over young, for whose convenience he set up a carriage, and for whose health he travelled to Lisbon and Madeira, and Nice, and Florence, and Hastings, and Clifton, and all the places by sea and land, abroad and at home, where sick people go to get well,—at one of which she, poor lady, died.

Then he espoused a buxom, jolly, merry widow, who had herself had two husbands, and who seemed likely to see him out; but the small-pox came in her way, and she died also.

Then he married his present lady, a charming woman, neither fat nor thin, nor young nor old—not very healthy, nor particularly sickly—who makes him very happy, and seems to find her own happiness in making him so.

He has no children by any of his wives; but has abundance of adherents in parlour and hall. Half the poor of the parish are occasionally to be found in his kitchen, and his dining-room is

the seat of hospitality, not only to his old friends of the town and his new friends of the country, but to all the families of all his wives. He talks of them (for he talks more now than he did at the Belford election, having fallen into the gossiping habit of "narrative old age") in the quietest manner possible, mixing, in a way the most diverting and the most unconscious, stories of his first wife and his second, of his present and his last. He seems to have been perfectly happy with all of them, especially with this. But if he should have the misfortune to lose that delightful person, he would certainly console himself, and prove his respect for the state, by marrying again; and such is his reputation as a super-excellent husband, especially in the main article of giving his wives their own way, that, in spite of his being even now an octogenarian, I have no doubt but there would be abundance of fair candidates for the heart and hand of the good Rector of Hadley.

KING HARWOOD.

THE good town of Belford swarmed, of course, with single ladies—especially with single ladies of that despised denomination which is commonly known by the title of old maids. For gentlewomen of that description, especially of the less affluent class, (and although such a thing may be found here and there, a rich old maid is much rarer than a poor one,) a provincial town in this protestant country, where nunneries are not, is the natural refuge. A village life, however humble the dwelling, is at once more expensive—since messengers and conveyances, men and horses, of some sort, are in the actual country indispensable, — and more melancholy, for there is a sense of loneliness and insignificance, a solitude within doors and without, which none but an unconnected and unprotected

woman can thoroughly understand. And London, without family ties, or personal importance, or engrossing pursuit,—to be poor and elderly, idle and alone in London, is a climax of desolation which everybody can comprehend, because almost every one must, at some time or other, have felt in a greater or less degree the humbling sense of individual nothingness—of being but a drop of water in the ocean, a particle of sand by the sea-shore, which so often presses upon the mind amidst the bustling crowds and the splendid gaieties of the great city. To be rich or to be busy is the necessity of London.

The poor and the idle, on the other hand, get on best in a country town. Belford was the paradise of ill-jointed widows and portionless old maids. There they met on the table-land of gentility, passing their mornings in calls at each other's houses, and their evenings in small tea-parties, seasoned with a rubber or a pool, and garnished with the little quiet gossiping (call it not scandal, gentle reader !) which their habits required. So large a portion of the population consisted of single ladies, that it

might almost have been called a maiden town. Indeed, a calculating Cantab, happening to be there for the long vacation, amused his leisure by taking a census of the female householders, beginning with the Mrs. Davisons—fine alert old ladies, between seventy and eighty, who, being proud of their sprightliness and vigour, were suspected of adding a few more years to their age than would be borne out by the register,—and ending with Miss Letitia Pierce, a damsel on the confines of forty, who was more than suspected of a slight falsification of dates the converse way. I think he made the sum total, in the three parishes, amount to one hundred and seventy-four.

The part of the town in which they chiefly congregated, the lady's *quartier*, was one hilly corner of the parish of St. Nicholas, a sort of highland district, all made up of short rows, and pigmy places, and half-finished crescents, entirely uncontaminated, by the vulgarity of shops, ill-paved, worse lighted, and so placed that it seemed to catch all the smoke of the more thickly inhabited part of the town, and

was constantly encircled by a wreath of vapour, like Snowdon or Skiddaw.

Why the good ladies chose this elevated and inconvenient position, one can hardly tell; perhaps because it was cheap, perhaps because it was genteel—perhaps from a mixture of both causes; I can only answer for the fact; and of this favourite spot the most favoured portion was a slender line of houses, tall and slim, known by the name of Warwick-terrace, consisting of a tolerably spacious dwelling at either end, and four smaller tenements linked two by two in the centre.

The tenants of Warwick-terrace were, with one solitary exception, exclusively female. One of the end houses was occupied by a comfortable-looking, very round Miss Blackall, a spinster of fifty, the richest and the simplest of the row, with her parrot, who had certainly more words, and nearly as many ideas, as his mistress: her black footman, whose fine livery, white turned up with scarlet, and glittering with silver lace, seemed rather ashamed of his “sober-suited” neighbours; the plush waistcoat and inexpres-

sibles blushing as if in scorn. The other corner was filled by Mrs. Leeson, a kind-hearted bustling dame, the great ends of whose existence were visiting and cards, who had probably made more morning calls and played a greater number of rubbers than any woman in Belford, and who boasted a tabby cat, and a head maid called Nanny, that formed a proper pendent to the parrot and Cæsar. Of the four centre habitations, one pair was the residence of Miss Savage, who bore the formidable reputation of a sensible woman—an accusation which rested probably on no worse foundation than a gruff voice and something of a vinegar aspect,—and of Miss Steele, who, poor thing! underwent a still worse calumny, and was called literary, simply because forty years ago she had made a grand poetical collection, consisting of divers manuscript volumes, written in an upright taper hand, and filled with such choice morceaus as Mrs. Greville's "Ode to Indifference;" Miss Seward's "Monody on Major André," sundry translations of Metastasio's "Nice," and a considerable collection of Enigmas, on which

stock, undiminished and unincreased, she still traded ; whilst the last brace of houses, linked together like the Siamese twins, were divided between two families, the three Miss Lockes,—whom no one ever dreamt of talking of as separate or individual personages—one should as soon have thought of severing the Graces, or the Furies, or the Fates, or any other classical trio, as of knowing them apart : the three Miss Lockes lived in one of these houses, and Mrs. Harwood and her two daughters in the other.

It is with the Harwoods only that we have to do at present.

Mrs. Harwood was the widow of the late and the mother of the present rector of Dighton, a family-living purchased by the father of her late husband, who, himself a respectable and affluent yeoman, aspired to a rivalry with his old landlord, the squire of the next parish ; and, when he had sent his only son to the university, established him in the rectory, married him to the daughter of an archdeacon, and set up a public-house, called the Harwood Arms—

somewhat to the profit of the Heralds' Office, who had to discover or to invent these illustrious bearings—had accomplished the two objects of his ambition, and died contented.

The son proved a bright pattern of posthumous duty ; exactly the sort of rector that the good old farmer would have wished to see, did he turn out,—respectable, conscientious, always just, and often kind ; but so solemn, so pompous, so swelling in deportment and grandiloquent in speech, that he had not been half-a-dozen years inducted in the living before he obtained the popular title of Bishop of Dighton—a distinction which he seems to have taken in good part, by assuming a costume as nearly episcopal as possible at all points, and copying, with the nicest accuracy, the shovel hat and buzz wig of the prelate of the diocese, a man of seventy-five. He put his coachman and footboy into the right clerical livery, and adjusted his household and modelled his behaviour according to his strictest notions of the stateliness and decorum proper to a dignitary of the church.

Perhaps he expected that the nickname by which he was so little aggrieved would some day or other be realised; some professional advancement he certainly reckoned upon. But, in spite of his cultivating most assiduously all profitable connexions—of his christening his eldest son “Earl” after a friend of good parliamentary interest, and his younger boy “King” after another—of his choosing one noble sponsor for his daughter Georgina, and another for his daughter Henrietta—he lived and died with no better preferment than the rectory of Dighton, which had been presented to him by his honest father five-and-forty years before, and to which his son Earl succeeded: the only advantage which his careful courting of patrons and patronage had procured for his family being comprised in his having obtained for his son King, through the recommendation of a noble friend, the situation of clerk at his banker’s in Lombard-street.

Mrs. Harwood, a stately portly dame, almost as full of parade as her husband, had on her part been equally unlucky. The grand object

of her life had been to marry her daughters, and in that she had failed, probably because she had been too ambitious and too open in her attempts. Certain it is that, on the removal of the widow to Belford, poor Miss Harwood, who had been an insipid beauty, and whose beauty had turned into sallowness and haggardness, was forced to take refuge in ill health and tender spirits, and set up, as a last chance, for interesting; whilst Miss Henrietta, who had five-and-twenty years before reckoned herself accomplished, still, though with diminished pretensions, kept the field—sang with a voice considerably the worse for wear, danced as often as she could get a partner, and flirted with beaux of all ages, from sixty to sixteen—chiefly, it may be presumed, with the latter, because of all mankind a shy lad from college is the likeliest to be taken in by an elderly miss. A wretched personage, under an affectation of boisterous gaiety, was Henrietta Harwood! a miserable specimen of that most miserable class of single women who, at forty and upwards, go

about dressing and talking like young girls, and will not grow old.

Earl Harwood was his father slightly modernised. He was a tall, fair, heavy-looking man, not perhaps quite so solemn and pompous as "the bishop," but far more cold and supercilious. If I wished to define him in four letters, the little word "prig" would come very conveniently to my aid; and perhaps, in its compendious brevity, it conveys as accurate an idea of his manner as can be given: a prig of the slower and graver order was Earl Harwood.

His brother King, on the other hand, was a coxcomb of the brisker sort; *up*—not like generous champagne; but like cider, or perry, or gooseberry-wine, or "the acid flash of soda-water;" or, perhaps, more still like the slight froth that runs over the top of that abomination, a pot of porter, to which, by the way, together with the fellow abominations, snuff and cigars, he was inveterately addicted. Conceit and pretension, together with a dash of the

worst because the finest vulgarity, that which thinks itself genteel, were the first and last of King Harwood. His very pace was an amble—a frisk, a skip, a strut, a prance—he could not walk; and he always stood on tiptoe, so that the heels of his shoes never wore out. The effect of this was, of course, to make him look less tall than he was; so that, being really a man of middle height, he passed for short. His figure was slight, his face fair, and usually adorned with a smile half supercilious and half self-satisfied, and set off by a pair of most conceited-looking spectacles. There is no greater atrocity than his who shows you glass for eyes, and, instead of opening wide those windows of the heart, fobs you off with a bit of senseless crystal which conceals, instead of enforcing, an honest meaning —“there was no speculation in those *pebbles* which he did glare withal.” For the rest, he was duly whiskered and curled; though the eyelashes, when by a chance removal of the spectacles they were discovered, lying under suspicion of sandiness; and, the whiskers and hair being auburn, it was a disputed point

whether the barber's part of him consisted in dyeing his actual locks, or in a supplemental periwig: that the curls were of their natural colour, nobody believed that took the trouble to think about it.

But it was his speech that was the prime distinction of King Harwood: the pert fops of Congreve's comedies, *Petulant*, *Witwoud*, *Froth*, and *Brisk*, (pregnant names!) seemed but types of our hero. He never opened his lips (and he was always chattering) but to proclaim his own infinite superiority to all about him. He would have taught *Burke* to speak, and *Reynolds* to paint, and *John Kemble* to act. The *Waverley* novels would have been the better for his hints; and it was some pity that *Shakspeare* had not lived in these days, because he had a suggestion that would greatly have improved his *Lear*.

Nothing was too great for him to meddle with, and nothing too little; but his preference went very naturally with the latter, which amalgamated most happily with his own mind: and when the unexpected legacy of a plebeian

great-aunt, the despised sister of his grandfather the farmer, enabled him to leave quill-driving, of which he was heartily weary, and to descend from the high stool in Lombard-street, on which he had been perched for five-and-twenty years, there doubtless mingled with the desire to assist his family, by adding his small income to their still smaller one—for this egregious coxcomb was an excellent son and a kind brother, just in his dealings, and generous in his heart, when through the thick coating of foppery one could find the way to it—some wish to escape from the city, where his talents were, as he imagined, buried in the crowd, smothered amongst the jostling multitudes, and to emerge in all his lustre in the smaller and more select coteries of the country. On his arrival at Belford accordingly he installed himself at once as arbiter of fashion, the professed *beau garçon*, the lady's man of the town and neighbourhood; and having purchased a horse, and ascertained, to his great comfort, that his avocation as a banker's clerk was either wholly unsuspected in the county circles which

his late father had frequented, or so indistinctly known that the very least little white lie in the world would pass him off as belonging to the House, he boldly claimed acquaintance with everybody in the county whose name he had ever heard in his life, and, regardless of the tolerably visible contempt of the gentlemen, proceeded to make his court to the ladies with might and with main.

He miscalculated, however, the means best fitted to compass his end. Women, however frivolous, do not like a frivolous man: they would as soon take a fancy to their mercer as to the man who offers to choose their silks; and if he will find fault with their embroidery, and correct their patterns, he must lay his account in being no more regarded by them than their milliner or their maid. Sooth to say, your fine lady is an ungrateful personage; she accepts the help, and then laughs at the officious helper — sucks the orange and throws away the peel. This truth found King Harwood, when, after riding to London, and running all over that well-sized town to match in German lamb's wool

the unmatched brown and gold feathers of the game-cock's neck, which that ambitious embroideress Lady Delaney aspired to imitate in a table-carpet, he found himself saluted for his pains with the malicious soubriquet of King of the Bantams. This and other affronts drove him from the county society, which he had intended to enlighten and adorn, to the less brilliant circles of Belford, which perhaps suited his taste better, he being of that class of persons who had rather reign in the town than serve in the country; whilst his brother Earl, safe in cold silence and dull respectability, kept sedulously amongst his rural compeers, and was considered one of the most unexceptionable grace-sayers at a great dinner of any clergyman in the neighbourhood.

To Belford, therefore, the poor King of the Bantams was content to come, thinking himself by far the cleverest and most fashionable man in the place; an opinion which, I am sorry to say, he had pretty much to himself. The gentlemen smiled at his pretensions, and the young ladies laughed, which was just the reverse

of the impression which he intended to make. How the thing happened, I can hardly tell, for in general the young ladies of a country town are sufficiently susceptible to attention from a London man. Perhaps the man was not to their taste, as conceit finds few favourers; or perhaps they disliked the kind of attention, which consisted rather in making perpetual demands on their admiration, than in offering the tribute of his own; perhaps, also, the gentleman, who partook of the family fault, and would be young in spite of the register, was too old for them. However it befel, he was no favourite amongst the Belford belles.

Neither was he in very good odour with the mammas. He was too poor, too proud, too scornful, and a Harwood, in which name all the pretension of the world seemed gathered. Nay, he not only in his own person out-Harwooded Harwood, but was held accountable for not a few of the delinquencies of that obnoxious race, whose airs had much augmented since he had honoured Belford by his presence. Before his arrival, Miss Henrietta and

her stately mamma had walked out, like the other ladies of the town, unattended : the King came, and they could not stir without being followed as their shadow by the poor little foot-boy, who formed the only serving-man of their establishment ; before that *avatar* they dined at six, now seven was the family hour : and whereas they were wont, previously, to take that refection without alarming their neighbours, and causing Miss Blackall's parrot to scream, and Mrs. Leeson's cat to mew, now the solitary maid of all-work, or perchance the King himself, tinkled and jangled the door-bell, or the parlour bell, to tell those who knew it before that dinner was ready, (I wonder he had not purchased a gong,) and to set every lady in the Row a moralizing on the sin of pride and the folly of pretension. Ah ! if they who are at once poor and gently bred could but understand how safe a refuge from the contempt of the rich they would find in frank and open poverty ! how entirely the pride of the world bends before a simple and honest humility ! —how completely we, the poorest, may say with Constance (provided only that we imitate her

action, and throw ourselves on the ground as we speak the words), “ Here is my throne,—let kings come bow to me !” — if they would but do this, how much of pain and grief they might save themselves ! But this was a truth which the Harwoods had yet to discover.

Much of his unpopularity might, however, be traced to a source on which he particularly prided himself:—a misfortune which has befallen many a wiser man.

Amongst his other iniquities the poor King of the Bantams had a small genius for music, an accomplishment that flattered at once his propensities and his pretensions, his natural love of noise and his acquired love of consequence. He sung, with a falsetto that rang through one’s head like the screams of a young peacock, divers popular ballads in various languages, very difficult to distinguish each from each ;* he was a most pertinacious and intoler-

* Non-articulation is the besetting sin of flourishing singers of all ranks. It is only the very best and the very highest who condescend, not merely to give expression to their words, but words to their expression. Some, of a far better order of taste than Mr. King Harwood, are addicted to this tantalizing defect. I remember an instance of two

able scraper on the violoncello, an instrument which it is almost as presumptuous to touch, unless finely, as it is to attempt and to fail in an epic poem or an historical picture; and he showed the extent and variety of his want of power, by playing quite as ill on the flute, which again may be compared to a failure in the composition of an acrostic, or the drawing of a butterfly. Sooth to say, he was equally bad in all; and yet he contrived to be quite as great a pest to the unmusical part of society—by far the larger part in Belford certainly, and, I suspect, everywhere—as if he had actually been the splendid performer he fancied himself. Nay, he was even a greater nuisance than a fine player can be; for if music be, as Mr. Charles Lamb happily calls it, “measured malice,” malice out of all measure must be admitted to be worse still.

such, who were singing very sweetly, as to mere musical sound, some Italian duets, when an old gentleman, quite of the old school, complained that he could not understand them. They then politely sung an English air; but as they had omitted to announce their intention, he never discovered the change of language, and repeated his old complaint, “Ah, I dare say it’s all very fine; but I can’t understand it!”

Generally speaking, people who dislike the art deserve to be as much bored as they are by the "concord of sweet sounds." There is not one English lady in a thousand who, when asked if she be fond of music, has courage enough to say, No: she thinks it would be rude to do so; whereas, in my opinion, it is a civil way of getting out of the scrape, since, if the performance be really such as commands admiration, (and the very best music is an enjoyment as exquisite as it is rare,*) the delight evinced comes as a pleasant surprise, or as a graceful compliment; and if (as is by very far most probable) the singing chance to be such as one would rather not hear, why then

* The circumstances under which music is heard often communicate to it a charm not its own. A military band, for instance, in the open air, wind instruments upon the water, the magnificent masses of the Romish church, or the organ pealing along the dim aisles of our own venerable cathedrals, will scarcely fail to exercise a strong power over the imagination. There is another association in music, that is perhaps more delightful than all: the young innocent girl who trips about the house, carolling snatches of songs with her round, clear, youthful voice—gay, and happy, and artless as an unaged bird.

one has, at least, the very great comfort of not being obliged to simper and profess oneself pleased, but may seem as tired, and look as likely to yawn as one will, without offering any particular affront, or incurring any worse imputation than that of being wholly without taste for music—a natural defect, at which the amateur who has been excruciating one's ears vents his contempt in a shrug of scornful pity, little suspecting how entirely (as is often the case with that amiable passion) the contempt is mutual.

Now there are certain cases under which the evil of music is much mitigated: when one is not expected to listen for instance, as at a large party in London, or, better still, at a great house in the country, where there are three or four rooms open, and one can get completely out of the way, and hear no more of the noise than of a peal of bells in the next parish. Music, under such circumstances, may be endured with becoming philosophy. But the poor Belfordians had no such resource. Their parties were held, at the best, in two small drawing-rooms laid into one by the aid of folding-

doors; so that when Mr. King, accompanied by his sister Henrietta, who drummed and strummed upon the piano like a boarding-school Miss, and sung her part in a duet with a voice like a raven, began his eternal vocalization, (for, never tired of hearing himself, he never dreamt of leaving off until his unhappy audience parted for the night,) — when once the self-delighting pair began, the deafened whist-table groaned in dismay; lottery-tickets were at a discount; commerce at a stand-still; Pope Joan died a natural death, and the pool of quadrille came to an untimely end.

The reign of the four kings, so long the mild and absolute sovereigns of the Belford parties, might be said to be over, and the good old ladies, long their peaceable and loving subjects, submitted with peevish patience to the yoke of the usurper. They listened and they yawned; joined in their grumbling by the other vocalists of this genteel society, the singing young ladies and manœuvring mammas, who found themselves literally “pushed from their stools,” their music stools, by the Harwood monopoly of the instrument, as well as affronted by the Bantam King’s

intolerance of all bad singing except his own. How long the usurpation would have lasted, how long the discontent would have been confined to hints and frowns, and whispered mutterings, and very intelligible innuendoes, without breaking into open rebellion,—in other words, how long it would have been before King Harwood was sent to Coventry, there is no telling. He himself put an end to his musical sovereignty, as other ambitious rulers have done before him, by an overweening desire to add to the extent of his dominions.

Thus it fell out.

One of the associations which did the greatest honour to Belford, was a society of amateur musicians—chiefly tradesmen, imbued with a real love of the art, and a desire to extend and cultivate an amusement which, however one may laugh at the affectation of musical taste, is, when so pursued, of a very elevating and delightful character—who met frequently at each other's houses for the sake of practice, and, encouraged by the leadership of an accomplished violin player, and the possession of two or three

voices of extraordinary brilliancy and power, began about this time to extend their plan, to rehearse two or three times a week at a great room belonging to one of the society, and to give amateur concerts at the Town-hall.

Very delightful these concerts were. Every man exerted himself to the utmost, and, accustomed to play the same pieces with the same associates, the performance had much of the unity which makes the charm of family music. They were so unaffected too, so thoroughly unpretending — there was such genuine good taste, so much of the true spirit of enjoyment, and so little of trickery and display, that the audience, who went prepared to be indulgent, were enchanted ; the amateur concerts became the fashion of the day, and all the elegance and beauty of the town and neighbourhood crowded to the Belford Town-hall. This was enough for Mr. King Harwood. He had attended once as a hearer, and he instantly determined to be heard. It was pretermittting his dignity, to be sure, and his brother, Earl, would have been dumb for ever before he would have con-

descended to such an association. But the vanity of our friend the King was of a more popular description. Rather than not get applause, he would have played Punch at Belford fair; accordingly he offered himself as a tenor singer to the amateur society, and they, won by his puffs of his musical genius,—which, to say the truth, had about them the prevailing power which always results from the speaker's perfect faith in his own assertions, the self-deluding faith which has never failed to make converts, from Mahomet down to Joanna Southcot,—they, won to belief, and civilly unwilling to put his talents to the proof, accepted his services for the next concert.

Luckless King Harwood! He to sing in concerted pieces! Could not he have remembered that unhappy supper of the Catch and Glee Club in Finsbury-square, where, for his sake, “Non Nobis, Domine,” was hissed, and “Glorious Apollo” wellnigh damned? He to aspire to the dictatorship of country musicians! Had he wholly forgotten that still more unlucky morning, when, aspiring to reform the

church music of Dighton, he and the parish clerk, and the obedient sexton, began, as announced and pre-arranged, to warble Luther's Hymn; whilst all the rest of the singing gallery, three clarionets, two French horns, the bassoon, and the rustic vocalists struck up the Hundredth Psalm; and the uninstructed charity children, catching the last word as given out by the clerk, completed the triple chain, not of harmony, but of discord, by screaming out at the top of their shrill childish voices the sweet sounds of the Morning Hymn? Was that day forgotten, and that day's mortification? — when my lord, a musical amateur of the first water, whom the innovation was intended to captivate, was fain to stop his cognoscentic ears, whilst Lady Julia held her handkerchief to her fair face to conceal her irrepressible laughter, and the unhappy source of this confusion ran first of all to the Rectory to escape from the tittering remarks of the congregation, and then half-way to London to escape from the solemn rebuke of the Rector? Could that hour be forgotten?

I suppose it was. Certain he offered himself

and was accepted ; and was no sooner installed a member of the Society, than he began his usual course of dictation and finding fault. His first contest was that very fruitful ground of dispute, the concert bill. With the instrumental pieces he did not meddle ; but in the vocal parts the Society had wisely confined themselves to English words and English composers, to the great horror of the new *primo tenore*, who proposed to substitute Spohr and Auber and Rossini, for Purcell and Harrington and Bishop, and to have “no vulgar English name” in the whole bill of fare.

“To think of the chap !” exclaimed our good friend Stephen Lane, when Master King proposed a quartet from the “Cenerentola,” in lieu of the magnificent music which has wellnigh turned one of the finest tragedies in the world into the very finest opera — (I mean, of course, Matthew Locke’s music in Macbeth) — “To think of the chap !” exclaimed Stephen, who had sung Hecate with admirable power and beauty for nearly forty years, and whose noble bass voice still retained its unrivalled richness of tone

—“ To think of his wanting to frisk me into some of his parly-voos stuff, and daring to sneer and snigger not only at old Locke’s music ! — and I’ll thank any of your parly-voos to show me finer,—but at Shakspeare himself ! I don’t know much of poetry, to be sure,” said Stephen ; “ but I know this, that Shakspeare’s the poet of Old England, and that every Englishman’s bound to stand up for him, as he is for his country or his religion ; and, dang it, if that chap dares to fleer at him again before my face, I’ll knock him down—and so you may tell him, Master Antony,” pursued the worthy butcher, somewhat wroth against the leader, whose courtesy had admitted the offending party,—“ so you may tell him ; and I tell you, that if I had not stood up all my life against the system, I’d strike, and leave you to get a bass where you could. I hate such puppies, and so you may tell him !” So saying, Stephen walked away, and the concert bill remained unaltered.

If (as is possible) there had been a latent hope that the new member would take offence

at his want of influence in the programme of the evening's amusement, and "strike" himself, the hope was disappointed. Most punctual in the orchestra was Mr. King Harwood, and most delighted to perceive a crowded and fashionable audience. He placed himself in a conspicuous situation and a most conspicuous attitude, and sat out first an overture of Weber's, then the fine old duet "Time has not thinned my flowing hair," and then the cause of quarrel, "When shall we three meet again," in which Stephen had insisted on his bearing no part, with scornful *sang-froid* — although the Hecate was so superb, and the whole performance so striking, that, as if to move his spleen, it had been rapturously encored. The next piece was "O Nanny!" harmonized for four voices, in which he was to bear a part — and a most conspicuous part he did bear, sure enough! The essence of that sweetest melody, which "custom cannot stale," is, as every one knows, its simplicity; but simplicity made no part of our vocalist's merits! No one that heard him will ever forget the trills, and runs and shakes, the

cadences and flourishes, of that "O Nanny!"—The other three voices (one of which was Stephen's) stopped in astonishment, and the panting violins "toiled after him in vain." At last, Stephen Lane, somewhat provoked at having been put out of his own straight course by any thing,—for, as he said afterwards, he thought he could have sung "O Nanny!" in the midst of an earthquake, and determined to see if he could stop the chap's flourishes, — suddenly snatched the fiddlestick out of the hands of the wondering leader, and jerked the printed glee out of the white-gloved hands of the singer, as he was holding the leaves with the most delicate affectation—sent them sailing and fluttering over the heads of the audience, and then, as the King, nothing daunted, continued his variations on "Thou wert fairest," followed up his blow by a dexterous twitch with the same convenient instrument at the poor beau's caxon, which flew spinning along the ceiling, and alighted at last on one of the ornaments of the centre chandelier, leaving the luckless vocalist with a short crop of reddish hair, slightly bald

and somewhat grizzled, a fierce pair of whiskers curled and dyed, and a most chap-fallen countenance, in the midst of the cheers, the bravos, and the encores of the diverted audience, who laughed at the exploit from the same resistless impulse that tempted honest Stephen to the act.

“Flesh and blood could not withstand it, man!” exclaimed he apologetically, holding out his huge red fist, which the crest-fallen beau was far too angry to take; “but I’m quite ready to make the wig good; I’ll give you half-a-dozen, if you like, in return for the fun; and I’d recommend their fitting tighter, for really it’s extraordinary what a little bit of a jerk sent that fellow flying up to the ceiling just like a bird. The fiddlestick’s none the worse — nor you either, if you could but think so.”

But in the midst of this consolatory and conciliatory harangue, the discomfited hero of the evening disappeared, leaving his “O Nanny!” under the feet of the company, and his periwig perched on the chandelier over their heads.

The result of this adventure was, in the first place, a most satisfactory settlement of the

question of wig or no wig, which had divided the female world of Belford; and a complete cure of his musical mania on the part of its hero. He never sung a note again, and has even been known to wince at the sound of a barrel organ, whilst those little vehicles of fairy tunes, French work-boxes and snuff-boxes, were objects of his especial alarm. He always looked as if he expected to hear the sweet air of "O Nanny!" issuing from them.

One would have thought, that such a calamity would have been something of a lesson. But vanity is a strong-rooted plant that soon sprouts out again, crop it off as closely as you may, and the misadventure wrought but little change in his habits. For two or three days (probably whilst a new wig was making) he kept his room, sick or sulky; then he rode over to Dighton, for two or three days more; after which he returned to Belford, revisited his old haunts and renewed his old ways, strutting and skipping as usual, the loudest at public meetings—the busiest on committees—the most philosophical member of the Philosophical Society, at

which, by the way, adventuring with all the boldness of ignorance on certain chemical experiments, he very literally burnt his fingers; and the most horticultural of the horticulturalists, marching about in a blue apron, like a real gardener, flourishing watering-pots, cheapening budding-knives, and boasting of his marvels in grafting and pruning, although the only things resembling trees in his mother's slip of a garden were some smoky China roses that would not blow, and a few blighted currants that refused to ripen.

But these were trifles. He attended all the more serious business of the town and county—was a constant man at the vestry, although no householder, and at borough and county meetings, although he had not a foot of land in the world. He attended rail-road meetings, navigation meetings, turnpike meetings, gas-work meetings, paving meetings, Macadamizing meetings, water-work meetings, cottage-allotment meetings, anti-slavetrade meetings, church missionary meetings, education meetings of every sort, and dissenting meetings of

all denominations ; never failed the bench ; was as punctual at an inquest as the coroner, at the quarter-sessions as the chairman, at the assizes as the judge, and hath been oftener called to order by the court, and turned out of the grand-jury room by the foreman, than any other man in the county. In short, as Stephen Lane, whom he encountered pretty frequently in the course of his perambulations, pithily observed of him, “ A body was sure to find the chap wherever he had no business.”

Stephen, who probably thought he had given him punishment enough, regarded the poor King after the fashion in which his great dog Smoker would look upon a cur whom he had tossed once and disdained to toss again—a mixture of toleration and contempt. The utmost to which the good butcher was ever provoked by his adversary’s noisiest nonsense or pertest presumption, was a significant nod towards the chandelier from whence the memorable wig had once hung pendent, a true escutcheon of pretence ; or, if that memento were not sufficient, the whistling a few bars of “ Where thou wert

fairest,"—a gentle hint, which seldom failed of its effect in perplexing and dumb-founding the orator.

They were, however, destined to another encounter ; and, as so often happens in this world of shifting circumstance, the result of that encounter brought out points of character which entirely changed their feelings and position towards each other.

Stephen had been, as I have before said, or meant to say, a mighty cricketer in his time ; and, although now many stone too heavy for active participation, continued as firmly attached to the sport, as fond of looking on and promoting that most noble and truly English game, as your old cricketer, when of a hearty and English character, is generally found to be. He patronised and promoted the diversion on all occasions, formed a weekly club at Belford for the sake of practice, assigned them a commodious meadow for a cricket-ground, trained up sons and grandsons to the exercise, made matches with all the parishes round, and was so sedulous in maintaining the credit of the

Belford Eleven, that not a lad came into the place as an apprentice, or a journeyman—especially if he happened to belong to a cricketing county—without Stephen's examining into his proficiency in his favourite accomplishment. Towards blacksmiths, who from the development of muscular power in the arms are often excellent players, and millers, who are good cricketers one scarcely knows why—it runs in the trade—his attention was particularly directed, and his researches were at last rewarded by the discovery of a first-rate batsman, at a forge nearly opposite his own residence.

Caleb Hyde, the handicraftsman in question, was a spare, sinewy, half-starved looking young man, as ragged as the wildest colt he ever shod. Humphry Clinker was not in a more unclothed condition when he first shocked the eyes of Mrs. Tabitha Bramble; and, Stephen seeing that he was a capital ironsmith, and sure to command good wages, began to fear that his evil plight arose, as in nine cases out of ten raggedness does arise, from the gentle seductions of the beer-houses. On inquiry, however, he found

that his protégé was as sober as if there were not a beer-house in the world; that he had been reduced to his present unseemly plight by a long fever; and that his only extravagance consisted in his having, ever since he was out of his apprenticeship, supported by the sweat of his brow an aged mother and a sickly sister, for whose maintenance, during his own tedious illness, he had pawned his clothes, rather than allow them to receive relief from the parish. This instance of affectionate independence won our butcher's heart.

“That's what I call acting like a man and an Englishman!” exclaimed honest Stephen. “I never had a mother to take care of,” continued he, pursuing the same train of thought,—“that is, I never knew her; and an unnatural jade she must have been: but nobody belonging to me should ever have received parish money whilst I had the use of my two hands;—and this poor fellow must be seen to!”

And as an induction to the more considerable and more permanent benefits which he designed for him, he carried Caleb off to the cricket-

ground, where there was a grand rendezvous of all the amateurs of the neighbourhood, beating up for recruits for a great match to come off at Danby-park on the succeeding week.

“They give their players a guinea a day,” thought Stephen; “and I’d bet fifty guineas that Sir Thomas takes a fancy to him.”

Now, the Belford cricket-ground happened to be one of Mr. King Harwood’s many lounges. He never, to be sure, condescended to play there; but it was an excellent opportunity to find fault with those that did, to lay down the law on disputed points, to talk familiarly of the great men at Lord’s, and to boast how in one match, on that classic ground, he had got more notches than Mr. Ward, and had caught out Mr. Budd, and bowled out Lord Frederick. Anybody, to have heard him, would have thought him in his single person able to beat a whole eleven. That marquee on the Belford cricket-ground was the place to see King Harwood in his glory.

There he was, on the afternoon in question, putting in his word on all occasions; a word

of more importance than usual, because, Sir Thomas being himself unable to attend, his steward, whom he had sent to select the auxiliaries for the great match, was rather more inclined than his master would have been to listen to his suggestions, (a circumstance which may be easily accounted for by the fact, that the one did know him, and the other did not,) and therefore in more danger of being prejudiced by his scornful disdain of poor Caleb, towards whom he had taken a violent aversion, first as a protégé of Mr. Lane's, and secondly as being very literally an "unwashed artificer," Stephen having carried him off from the forge without even permitting the indispensable ablutions, or the slight improvement in costume which his scanty wardrobe would have permitted.

"He would be a disgrace to your eleven, Mr. Miller!" said his Bantamic Majesty to the civil steward; "Sir Thomas would have to clothe him from top to toe. There's the cricketer that I should recommend," added he, pointing to a young linendraper, in nankeen

shorts, light shoes, and silk stockings. "He understands the proper costume, and is, in my mind, a far prettier player. Out!" shouted "the skipping King," as Caleb, running a little too hard, saved himself from being stumped out by throwing himself down at full length, with his arm extended, and the end of his bat full two inches beyond the stride; "Out! fairly out!"

"No out!" vociferated the butcher; "it's a thing done every day. He's not out, and you are!" exclaimed the man of the cleaver.

But the cry of "out" having once been raised, the other side, especially the scout who had picked up and tossed the ball, and the wicket-keeper who had caught it from the scout, and the bowler—a dogged surly old player, whom Caleb's batting had teased not a little—joined in the clamour; and forthwith a confusion and a din of tongues, like that of the Tower of Babel, arose amongst cricketers and standers by; from the midst of which might be heard at intervals, "Lord's Ground," "Howard," "Mr. Ward," "Mr. Budd," "Lord Frede-

rick," and "The Marybone Club," in the positive dogmatical dictatorial tones of Mr. King Harwood; and the apparently irrelevant question, "O Nanny, wilt thou gang with me?" sung in his deep and powerful bary-tone voice by Stephen Lane.

At last, from mere weariness, there was a pause in the uproar; and our honest butcher, wiping his fine broad manly face, exclaimed, half in soliloquy,

"To be sure, it's foolish enough to make such a squabbling at a mere practising bout amongst ourselves; but one can't help being aggravated to hear a chap, who sits there never touching a bat, lay down the law as if he could beat all England; whereas it's my firm opinion that he never played in a match in his life. If he had, he'd want to play now. I defy a man that has been a cricketer not to feel a yearning, like, after the game when it's going on before his eyes; and I would not mind laying a smartish wager that his playing is just as bad as his singing."

"I'll play any man for thirty pounds, the best of two innings, at single wicket!" replied King, producing the money.

“Done,” replied Stephen ; “and Caleb, here, shall be your man.”

“Surely, Mr. Lane,” responded the affronted beau, “you can’t intend to match me with a dirty ragged fellow like that ? Of course I expect something like equality in my opponent—some decent person. No one could expect me to play against a journeyman blacksmith.”

“Why not ?” demanded the undaunted radical ; “we ’re all the same flesh and blood, whether clean or dirty—all sprung from Adam. And as to Caleb, poor fellow ! who pawned his clothes to keep his old mother and his sick sister, I only wish we were all as good. However, as that match would be, as you say, rather unequal—for I ’ll be bound that he’d beat you with his right hand tied behind him,—why, it would not be fair to put him against you. Here’s my little grandson Gregory, who won’t be ten years old till next Martinmas—he shall play you ; or, dang it, man,” shouted Stephen, “I’ll play you myself ! I have not taken a bat in hand these twenty years,” continued he,

beginning, in spite of the remonstrances of his friends, especially of poor Caleb, to strip off his coat and waistcoat, and prepare for the encounter,—“ I have not touched bat or ball for these twenty years, but I ’m as sure of beating that chap as if he was a woman. So hold your tongue, Peter Jenkins ! be quiet, Caleb ! Don’t you prate about your grandmother, Gregory ; for play I will. And get you ready, Master Harwood, for I mean to bowl you out at the first ball.”

And Master King did make ready accordingly ; tied one handkerchief round his white trousers and another round his waist, lamented the want of his nankeens and his cricketing pumps, poised the bats, found fault with the ball, and finally placed himself in attitude at the wicket ; and having won the toss, prepared to receive the ball, which Stephen on his part was preparing very deliberately to deliver.

Stephen in his time had been an excellent fast bowler ; and as that power was not affected by his size, (though probably somewhat impaired by want of practice,) and his confidence

in his adversary's bad play was much increased by the manner in which he stood at his wicket, he calculated with the most comfortable certainty on getting him out whenever he liked ;— and he was right ; the unlucky King could neither stop nor strike. He kept no guard over his wicket ; and in less than three minutes the stumps rattled without his having once hit the ball.

It was now Stephen's turn to go in—the fattest cricketer of a surety that ever wielded bat. He stood up to his wicket like a man, and considering that King's bowling was soon seen to be as bad as his hitting—that is to say, as bad as anything could be—there was every chance of his stopping the ball, and continuing in for three hours ; but whether he would get a notch in three days, whether dear Stephen Lane *could* run, was a problem. It *was* solved however, and sooner than might have been expected. He gave a mighty hit—a hit that sent her spinning into the hedge at the bottom of the ground—a hit, of which anybody else would have made three even at single wicket ; and,

setting out on a leisurely long-trot, contrived to get home, without much inconvenience, just before the panting King arrived at his ground. In his next attempt at running, he was not so fortunate: his antagonist reached the wicket whilst he was still in mid-career, so that his innings was over, and Mr. King Harwood had to go in against one.

Alas! he found it one too many! At the very second ball, he made a hit—his first hit—and unluckily a hit up, and Stephen caught him out by the mere exertion of lifting his right arm; so that the match was won at a single innings, the account standing thus:—

King Harwood, first innings . . . 0

Ditto second innings . . . 0

Stephen Lane, first innings . . . 1

It would have been difficult to give the scorers on both sides less trouble.

Stephen was charmed with his success, laughing like a child for very glee, tossing the ball into the air, and enjoying his triumph with unrestrained delight, until his antagonist, who had borne his defeat with much equanimity,

approached him with the amount of his bet: it then seemed to strike him suddenly, that Mr. Harwood was a gentleman, and poor, and that thirty pounds was too much for him to lose.

“No, no, sir,” said Stephen, gently putting aside the offered notes; “all ’s right now: we ’ve had our frolic out, and it ’s over. ’Twas foolish enough, at the best, in an old man like me, and so my dame will say; but as to playing for money, that ’s quite entirely out of the question.”

“These notes are yours, Mr. Lane,” replied King Harwood gravely.

“No such thing, man,” rejoined Stephen, more earnestly; “I never play for money, except now and then a sixpenny game at all-fours with Peter Jenkins there. I hate gambling. We ’ve all of us plenty to do with our bank-notes, without wasting them in such tom-foolery. Put ’em up, man, do. Keep ’em till we play the return match, and that won’t be in a hurry, I promise you; I’ve had enough of the sport for one while,” added Stephen, wiping his honest face, and preparing to reassume

his coat and waistcoat; "put up the notes, man, can't ye!"

"As I said before, Mr. Lane, this money is yours. You need not scruple taking it; for though I am a poor man, I do not owe a farthing in the world. The loss will occasion me no inconvenience. I had merely put aside this sum to pay Charles Wither the difference between my bay mare and his chestnut horse; and now I shall keep the mare; and perhaps, after all, she is the more useful roadster of the two. You *must* take the money."

"I'll be hanged if I do!" exclaimed Stephen, struck with sudden and unexpected respect at the frank avowal of poverty, the good principles, and the good temper of this speech. "How can I? Wasn't it my own rule, when I gave this bit of ground to the cricketers, that nobody should ever play in it for any stake, high or low? A pretty thing it would be if I, a reformer of forty years' standing, should be the first man to break a law of my own making! Besides, 'tis setting a bad example to these youngsters, and ought not to be done—and

sha'nt be done," continued Stephen, waxing positive. "You 've no notion what an obstinate old chap I can be! Better let me have my own way."

"Provided you let me have mine. You say you cannot take these notes—I feel that I cannot keep them. Suppose we make them over to your friend Caleb, to repair his wardrobe?"

"Dang it, you are a real good fellow!" shouted Stephen in an ecstasy, grasping King Harwood's hand, and shaking it as if he would shake it off; "a capital fellow! a true-born Englishman! and I beg your pardon from my soul for that trick of the wig and all my flouting and fleering before and since. You've taught me a lesson that I shan't forget in a hurry. Your heart 's in the right place; and when that 's the case, why a little finery and nonsense signifies no more than the patches upon Caleb's jacket, or the spots on a bullock's hide, just skin-deep, and hardly that. I 've a respect for you, man! and I beg your pardon over and over." And again and again he wrung King Harwood's hand in his huge red fist; whilst borne away by his honest

fervency, King returned the pressure and walked silently home, wondering a little at his own gratification, for a chord had been struck in his bosom that had seldom vibrated before, and the sensation was as new as it was delightful.

The next morning little Gregory Lane made his appearance at Warwick-terrace, mounted on Mr. Charles Wither's beautiful chestnut.

“Grandfather sends his duty, sir,” said the smiling boy, jumping down, and putting the bridle into King Harwood's hand, “and says that you had your way yesterday, and that he must have his to-day. He's as quiet as a lamb,” added the boy, already, like Harry Blount in Marmion, a “sworn horse-courser;” “and such a trotter! He'll carry you twelve miles an hour with ease.” And King Harwood accepted the offering; and Stephen and he were good friends ever after.

THE CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

OF all living objects, children, out of doors, seem to me the most interesting to a lover of nature. In a room, I may, perhaps, be allowed to exercise my privilege as an old maid, by confessing that they are in my eyes less engaging. If well-behaved, the poor little things seem constrained and *généés*—if ill-conducted, the *gêne* is transferred to the unfortunate grown-up people, whom their noise distracts and their questions interrupt. Within doors, in short, I am one of the many persons who like children in their places,—that is to say, in any place where I am not. But out of doors there is no such limitation: from the gipsy urchins under a hedge, to the little lords and ladies in a ducal demesne, they are charming to look at, to watch, and to listen to. Dogs are less amusing, flow-

ers are less beautiful, trees themselves are less picturesque.

I cannot even mention them without recalling to my mind twenty groups or single figures, of which Gainsborough would have made at once a picture and a story. The little aristocratic-looking girl, for instance, of some five or six years old, whom I used to see two years ago, every morning at breakfast-time, tripping along the most romantic street in England, (the High-street in Oxford,) attended, or escorted, it is doubtful which, by a superb Newfoundland dog, curly and black, carrying in his huge mouth her tiny workbag, or her fairy parasol, and guarding with so true a fidelity his pretty young lady, whilst she, on her part, queened it over her lordly subject with such diverting gravity, seeming to guide him whilst he guided her—led, whilst she thought herself leading, and finally deposited at her daily school, with as much regularity as the same sagacious quadruped would have displayed in carrying his master's glove, or fetching a stick out of the water. How I should like to see a portrait of

that fair demure elegant child, with her full short frock, her frilled trousers, and her blue kid shoes, threading her way, by the aid of her sable attendant, through the many small impediments of the crowded streets of Oxford!

Or the pretty scene of childish distress which I saw last winter on my way to East Court, — a distress which told its own story as completely as the picture of the broken pitcher! Driving rapidly along the beautiful road from Eversley Bridge to Finchamstead, up hill and down; on the one side a wide shelving bank, dotted with fine old oaks and beeches, intermingled with thorn and birch, and magnificent holly, and edging into Mr. Palmer's forest-like woods; on the other, an open hilly country, studded with large single trees. In the midst of this landscape, rich and lovely even in winter, in the very middle of the road, stood two poor cottage children, a year or two younger than the damsel of Oxford; a large basket dangling from the hand of one of them, and a heap of barley-meal — the barley-meal that should have been in the basket — the week's dinner of the pig, scat-

tered in the dirt at their feet. Poor little dears, how they cried ! They could not have told their story, had not their story told itself ;—they had been carrying the basket between them, and somehow it had slipped. A shilling remedied that disaster, and sent away all parties smiling and content.

Then again, this very afternoon, the squabbles of those ragged urchins at cricket on the common—a disputed point of *out* or *not out* ? The eight-year-old boy who will not leave his wicket ; the seven and nine-year-old imps who are trying to force him from his post ; the wrangling partisans of all ages, from ten downwards, the two contending *sides*, who are brawling for victory ; the grave, ragged umpire, a lad of twelve, with a stick under his arm, who is solemnly listening to the cause ; and the younger and less interested spectators, some just breeched, and others still condemned to the ignominious petticoat, who are sitting on the bank, and wondering which party will carry the day !

What can be prettier than this, unless it be the fellow-group of girls—sisters, I presume, to

the boys — who are laughing and screaming round the great oak ; then darting to and fro, in a game compounded of hide-and-seek and baseball. Now tossing the ball high, high amidst the branches ; now flinging it low along the common, bowling, as it were, almost within reach of the cricketers ; now pursuing, now retreating, running, jumping, shouting, bawling—almost shrieking with ecstasy ; whilst one sunburnt black-eyed gipsy throws forth her laughing face from behind the trunk of the old oak, and then flings a newer and a gayer ball—fortunate purchase of some hoarded sixpence—amongst her admiring playmates. Happy, happy children ! that one hour of innocent enjoyment is worth an age !

It was, perhaps, my love of picturesque children that first attracted my attention towards a little maiden of some six or seven years old, whom I used to meet, sometimes going to school, and sometimes returning from it, during a casual residence of a week or two some fifteen years ago in our good town of Belford. It was a very complete specimen of childish beauty ; what would

be called a picture of a child, — the very study for a painter ; with the round, fair, rosy face, coloured like the apple-blossom ; the large, bright, open blue eyes ; the broad white forehead, shaded by brown clustering curls, and the lips scarlet as winter berries. But it was the expression of that blooming countenance which formed its principal charm ; every look was a smile, and a smile which had in it as much of sweetness as of gaiety. She seemed, and she was, the happiest and the most affectionate of created beings. Her dress was singularly becoming. A little straw bonnet, of a shape calculated not to conceal, but to display the young pretty face, and a full short frock of gentianella blue, which served, by its brilliant yet contrasted colouring, to enhance the brightness of that brightest complexion. Tripping along to school with her neat covered basket in her chubby hand, the little lass was perfect.

I could not help looking and admiring, and stopping to look ; and the pretty child stopped too, and dropped her little curtsy ; and then I

spoke, and then she spoke,—for she was too innocent, too unfearing, too modest to be shy; so that Susy and I soon became acquainted; and in a very few days the acquaintanceship was extended to a fine open-countenanced man, and a sweet-looking and intelligent young woman, Susan's father and mother,—one or other of whom used to come almost every evening to meet their darling on her return from school; for she was an only one, — the sole offspring of a marriage of love, which was, I believe, reckoned unfortunate by everybody except the parties concerned: they felt and knew that they were happy.

I soon learnt their simple history. William Jervis, the only son of a rich carpenter, had been attached, almost from childhood, to his fair neighbour, Mary Price, the daughter of a haberdasher in a great way of business, who lived in the same street. The carpenter, a plodding, frugal artisan of the old school, who trusted to indefatigable industry and undeviating sobriety for getting on in life, had an instinctive mistrust of the more dashing and

speculative tradesman, and even, in the height of his prosperity, looked with cold and doubtful eyes on his son's engagement. Mr. Price's circumstances, however, seemed, and at the time were, so flourishing—his offers so liberal, and his daughter's character so excellent, that to refuse his consent would have been an unwarrantable stretch of authority. All that our prudent carpenter could do was, to delay the union, in hopes that something might still occur to break it off; and when, ten days before the time finally fixed for the marriage, the result of an unsuccessful speculation placed Mr. Price's name in the Gazette, most heartily did he congratulate himself on the foresight which, as he hoped, had saved him from the calamity of a portionless daughter-in-law. He had, however, miscalculated the strength of his son's affection for poor Mary, as well as the firm principle of honour which regarded their long and every-way sanctioned engagement as a bond little less sacred than wedlock itself; and on Mr. Price's dying, within a very few months, of that death which, although not included in the bills of mortality, is

yet but too truly recognised by the popular phrase, a broken heart, William Jervis, after vainly trying every mode of appeal to his obdurate father, married the orphan girl — in the desperate hope, that the step being once taken, and past all remedy, an only child would find forgiveness for an offence attended by so many extenuating circumstances.

But here, too, William, in his turn, miscalculated the invincible obstinacy of his father's character. He ordered his son from his house and his presence, dismissed him from his employment, forbade his very name to be mentioned in his hearing, and, up to the time at which our story begins, comported himself exactly as if he never had had a child.

William, a dutiful, affectionate son, felt severely the deprivation of his father's affection, and Mary felt for her William; but, so far as regarded their worldly concerns, I am almost afraid to say how little they regretted their change of prospects. Young, healthy, active, wrapt up in each other and in their lovely little girl, they found small difficulty

and no hardship in earning — he by his trade, at which he was so good a workman as always to command high wages, and she by needle-work — sufficient to supply their humble wants; and when the kindness of Walter Price, Mary's brother, who had again opened a shop in the town, enabled them to send their little Susy to a school of a better order than their own funds would have permitted, their utmost ambition seemed gratified.

So far was speedily made known to me. I discovered also that Mrs. Jervis possessed, in a remarkable degree, the rare quality called taste — a faculty which does really appear to be almost intuitive in some minds, let metaphysicians laugh as they may; and the ladies of Belford, delighted to find an opportunity of at once exercising their benevolence, and procuring exquisitely-fancied caps and bonnets at half the cost which they had been accustomed to pay to the fine yet vulgar milliner who had hitherto ruled despotically over the fashions of the place, did not fail to rescue their new and interesting protégée from the drudgery of sew-

ing white seam, and of poring over stitching and button-holes.

For some years, all prospered in their little household. Susy grew in stature and in beauty, retaining the same look of intelligence and sweetness which had in her early childhood fascinated all beholders. She ran some risk of being spoilt, (only that, luckily, she was of the grateful, unselfish, affectionate nature which seems unspoilable,) by the admiration of Mrs. Jervis's customers, who, whenever she took home their work, would send for the pretty Susan into the parlour, and give her fruit and sweetmeats, or whatever cates might be likely to please a childish appetite; which, it was observed, she contrived, whenever she could do so without offence, to carry home to her mother, whose health, always delicate, had lately appeared more than usually precarious. Even her stern grandfather, now become a master-builder, and one of the richest tradesmen in the town, had been remarked to look long and wistfully on the lovely little girl, as, holding by her father's hand, she tripped lightly

to church, although, on that father himself, he never deigned to cast a glance; so that the more acute denizens of Belford used to prognosticate that, although William was disinherited, Mr. Jervis's property would not go out of the family.

So matters continued awhile. Susan was eleven years old, when a stunning and unexpected blow fell upon them all. Walter Price, her kind uncle, who had hitherto seemed as prudent as he was prosperous, became involved in the stoppage of a great Glasgow house, and was obliged to leave the town; whilst her father, having unfortunately accepted bills drawn by him, under an assurance that they should be provided for long before they became due, was thrown into prison for the amount. There was, indeed, a distant hope that the affairs of the Glasgow house might come round, or, at least, that Walter Price's concerns might be disentangled from theirs; and, for this purpose, his presence, as a man full of activity and intelligence, was absolutely necessary in Scotland: but this prospect was precarious

and distant. In the mean time, William Jarvis lay lingering in prison, his creditor relying avowedly on the chance that a rich father could not, for shame, allow his son to perish there; whilst Mary, sick, helpless, and desolate, was too broken-spirited to venture an application to a quarter, from whence any slight hope that she might otherwise have entertained was entirely banished by the recollection that the penalty had been incurred through a relation of her own.

“Why should I go to him?” said poor Mary to herself, when referred by Mr. Barnard, her husband’s creditor, to her wealthy father-in-law—“why trouble him? He will never pay my brother’s debt: he would only turn me from his door, and, perhaps, speak of Walter and William in a way that would break my heart.” And, with her little daughter in her hand, she walked slowly back to a small room that she had hired near the gaol, and sat down sadly and heavily to the daily diminishing millinery work, which was now the only resource of the once happy family.

In the afternoon of the same day, as old Mr. Jervis was seated in a little summer-house at the end of his neat garden, gravely smoking his pipe over a tumbler of spirits and water, defiling the delicious odour of his honeysuckles and sweetbriars by the two most atrocious smells on this earth—the fumes of tobacco* and of gin—his meditations, probably none of the most agreeable, were interrupted, first by a modest single knock at the front-door, (which, the intermediate doors being open, he heard distinctly,) then by a gentle parley, and, lastly, by his old housekeeper's advance up the gravel walk, followed by a very young girl, who approached him hastily yet tremblingly, caught his rough hand with her little one, lifted up a sweet face, where smiles seemed breaking through her tears, and, in an attitude between standing and kneeling—an attitude of deep

* Whenever one thinks of Sir Walter Raleigh as the importer of this disgusting and noisome weed, it tends greatly to mitigate the horror which one feels for his unjust execution. Had he been only beheaded as the inventor of smoking, all would have been right.

reverence — faltered, in a low, broken voice, one low, broken word — “Grandfather !”

“How came this child here ?” exclaimed Mr. Jervis, endeavouring to disengage the hand which Susan had now secured within both hers — “how dared you let her in, Norris, when you knew my orders respecting the whole family ?”

“How dared I let her in ?” returned the housekeeper — “how could I help it ? Don't we all know that there is not a single house in the town where little Susan (Heaven bless her dear face !) is not welcome ! Don't the very gaolers themselves let her into the prison before hours and after hours ? And don't the sheriff himself, for as strict as he is said to be, sanction it ? Speak to your grandfather, Susy love — don't be dashed.”* And, with this encouraging exhortation, the kind-hearted housekeeper retired.

* *Dashed* — frightened. I believe this expression, though frequently used there, is not confined to Berkshire. It is one of the pretty provincial phrases by which Richardson has contrived to give a charming rustic grace to the early letters of Pamela.

Susan continued clasping her grandfather's hand, and leaning her face over it as if to conceal the tears which poured down her cheeks like rain.

“What do you want with me, child?” at length interrupted Mr. Jervis in a stern voice. “What brought you here?”

“Oh, grandfather! Poor father's in prison!”

“I did not put him there,” observed Mr. Jervis coldly: “you must go to Mr. Barnard on that affair”

“Mother did go to him this morning,” replied Susan, “and he told her that she must apply to you——”

“Well!” exclaimed the grandfather impatiently.

“But she said she dared not, angry as you were with her—more especially as it is through uncle Walter's misfortune that all this misery has happened. Mother dared not come to you.”

“She was right enough there,” returned Mr. Jervis. “So she sent you?”

“No, indeed; she knows nothing of my

coming. She sent me to carry home a cap to Mrs. Taylor, who lives in the next street, and as I was passing the door it came into my head to knock—and then Mrs. Norris brought me here—Oh, grandfather! I hope I have not done wrong! I hope you are not angry!—But if you were to see how sad and pale poor father looks in that dismal prison—and poor mother, how sick and ill she is, how her hand trembles when she tries to work—Oh, grandfather! if you could but see them, you would not wonder at my boldness.”

“All this comes of trusting to a speculating knave like Walter Price!” observed Mr. Jervis, rather as a soliloquy than to the child, who, however, heard and replied to the remark.

“He was very kind to me, was uncle Walter! He put me to school, to learn reading and writing, and cyphering, and all sorts of needle-work—not a charity-school, because he wished me to be amongst decent children, and not to learn bad ways. And he has written to offer to come to prison himself, if father wishes it—only—I don’t understand about

business—but even Mr. Barnard says that the best chance of recovering the money is his remaining at liberty ; and indeed, indeed, grandfather, my uncle Walter is not so wicked as you think for—indeed he is not.”

“ This child is grateful !” was the thought that passed through her grandfather’s mind ; but he did not give it utterance. He, however, drew her closer to him, and seated her in the summer-house at his side. “ So you can read and write, and keep accounts, and do all sorts of needle-work, can you, my little maid ? And you can run of errands, doubtless, and are handy about a house ? Should you like to live with me and Norris, and make my shirts, and read the newspaper to me of an evening, and learn to make puddings and pies, and be my own little Susan ? Eh ?—Should you like this ?”

“ Oh, grandfather !” exclaimed Susan, enchanted.

“ And water the flowers,” pursued Mr. Jervis, “ and root out the weeds, and gather the beau-pots ? Is not this a nice garden, Susy ?”

“ Oh, beautiful! dear grandfather, beautiful!”

“ And you would like to live with me in this pretty house and this beautiful garden—should you, Susy?”

“ Oh, yes, dear grandfather!”

“ And never wish to leave me?”

“ Oh, never! never!”

“ Nor to see the dismal gaol again—the dismal, dreary gaol?”

“ Never!—but father is to live here too?” inquired Susan, interrupting herself—“ father and mother?”

“ No!” replied her grandfather—“ neither of them. It was you whom I asked to live here with me. I have nothing to do with them, and you must choose between us.”

“ They not live here! I to leave my father and my mother—my own dear mother, and she so sick! my own dear father, and he in a gaol! Oh, grandfather! you cannot mean it—you cannot be so cruel!”

“ There is no cruelty in the matter, Susan. I give you the offer of leaving your parents,

and living with me ; but I do not compel you to accept it. You are an intelligent little girl, and perfectly capable of choosing for yourself. But I beg you to take notice that, by remaining with them, you will not only share, but increase their poverty ; whereas, with me, you will not only enjoy every comfort yourself, but relieve them from the burthen of your support."

"It is not a burthen," replied Susan firmly ; —" I know that, young and weak, and ignorant as I am now, I am yet of some use to my dear mother — and of some comfort to my dear father ; and every day I shall grow older and stronger, and more able to be a help to them both. And to leave them ! to live here in plenty, whilst they were starving ! to be gathering posies, whilst they were in prison ! Oh, grandfather ! I should die of the very thought. 'Thank you for your offer,'" continued she, rising, and dropping her little curtsy — "but my choice is made. Good evening, grandfather !"

"Don't be in such a hurry, Susy," rejoined her grandfather, shaking the ashes from his

pipe, taking the last sip of his gin and water, and then proceeding to adjust his hat and wig —“ Don't be in such a hurry : you and I shan't part so easily. You're a dear little girl, and since you won't stay with me, I must e'en go with you. The father and mother who brought up such a child must be worth bringing home. So, with your good leave, Miss Susan, we'll go and fetch them.”

And, in the midst of Susy's rapturous thanks, her kisses and her tears, out they sallied ; and the money was paid, and the debtor released, and established with his overjoyed wife in the best room of Mr. Jervis's pretty habitation, to the unspeakable gratitude of the whole party, and the ecstasie delight of the CARPENTER'S DAUGHTER.

SUPPERS AND BALLS ;

OR, TOWN VERSUS COUNTRY.

THIRTY years ago Belford was a remarkably sociable place, just of the right size for pleasant visiting. In very small towns people see each other too closely, and fall almost unconsciously into the habit of prying and peeping into their neighbours' concerns, and gossiping and tittle-tattling, and squabbling, and jostling, as if the world were not wide enough for them ; and such is the fact—their world is too narrow. In very great towns, on the other hand, folks see too little of one another, and do not care a straw for their near dwellers. Large provincial towns, the overgrown capitals of overgrown counties, are almost as bad in that respect as London, where next-door neighbours may come into the world, or go out of it—be born, or

married, or buried, without one's hearing a word of the birth, or the wedding, or the funeral, until one reads the intelligence, two or three days afterwards, in the newspapers.

Now in Belford, thirty years ago, whilst you were perfectly secure from any such cold and chilling indifference to your well or ill being, so you might reckon on being tolerably free from the more annoying impertinence of a minute and scrutinising curiosity. The place was too large for the one evil, and too small for the other : almost every family of the class commonly called genteel, visited and was visited by the rest of their order ; and not being a manufacturing town, and the trade, although flourishing, being limited to the supply of the inhabitants, and of the wealthy and populous neighbourhood, the distinction was more easily drawn than is usual in this commercial country ; and the gentry of Belford might be comprised in the members of the three learned professions, the principal partners in the banks, one or two of the most thriving brewers, and that numerous body of idle persons who live upon their

means, and whom the political economists are pleased, somewhat uncivilly, to denominate “the unproductive classes.”

Another favourable circumstance in the then state of the Belford society, was the circumstance of nobody's being over rich. Some had, to be sure, larger incomes than others; but there was no great monied man, no borough Cræsus, to look down upon his poorer neighbours, and insult them by upstart pride or pompous condescension. All met upon the table-land of gentility, and the few who were more affluent contrived, almost without exception, to disarm envy by using their greater power for the gracious purpose of diffusing pleasure and promoting sociability. And certainly a more sociable set of people could not easily have been found.

To say nothing at present of the professional gentlemen, or of that exceedingly preponderating part of the female “interest” (to borrow another cant phrase of the day), the widows and single ladies, the genteel inhabitants of Belford were as diversified as heart could desire. We

had two naval captains: the one, a bold, dashing open-hearted tar, who, after remaining two or three years unemployed, fuming, and chafing, and grumbling over his want of interest, got a ship, and died, after a brilliant career, at the summit of fame and fortune; the other, a steady, business-like person, who did his duty as an English sailor always does, but who, wanting the art of making opportunities, the uncalculating bravery, the happy rashness, which seems essential to that branch of the service, lived obscurely, and died neglected. His wife had in her temperament the fire that her husband wanted. She was a virago, and would, beyond all doubt, have thought nothing of encountering a whole fleet, whether friends or foes; whilst Sir Charles's lady (for our gallant officer had already won that distinction) was a poor, shrinking, delicate, weak-spirited little woman, who would have fainted at the sound of a signal-gun, and have died of a royal salute. They were great acquisitions to the society, especially Sir Charles, who, though he would have preferred a battle every day, had no objection, in

default of that diversion, to a party of any sort, — dance, supper, dinner, rout, nothing came amiss to him, although it must be confessed that he liked the noisiest best.

Then arrived a young Irish gentleman, who, having run away with an heiress and spent as much of her fortune as the Court of Chancery would permit, came to Belford to retrench, and to wait for a place, which, through some exceedingly indirect and remote channel of interest, he expected to procure, and for which he pretended to prepare and doubtless thought that he was preparing himself by the study of Cocker's Arithmetic. *He study Cocker !* Oh, dear me ! all that he was ever likely to know of pounds, shillings, and pence, was the art of spending them, in which he was a proficient. A gay, agreeable, thoughtless creature he was ; and so was his pretty wife. They had married so young, that whilst still looking like boy and girl, a tribe of boys and girls were rising round them, all alike gay and kind, and merry and thoughtless. They were the very persons to promote parties, since without them they could not live.

Then came a Scotch colonel in the Company's service, with an elegant wife and a pretty daughter. A mighty man for dinnering and suppering was he! I question if Ude be a better cook. I am quite sure that he does not think so much of his own talents in that way as our colonel did. He never heard of a turtle within twenty miles but he offered to dress it, and once nearly broke his neck in descending into a subterranean kitchen to superintend the haunches at a mayor's feast. An excellent person was he, and a jovial, and a perfect gentleman even in his white apron.

Then came two graver pairs: a young clergyman, who had married a rich and very charming widow, and seemed to think it right to appear staid and demure, to conceal the half-a-dozen years by which she had the disadvantage of him; and a widow and her son, a young man just from college, and intended for the diplomatic line, for which, if to be silent, solemn, safe and dull, be a recommendation, he was very eminently gifted.

Then we had my friend the talking gentleman and his pretty wife; then a half-pay

major, very prosy ; then a retired commissary, very dozy ; then a papa with three daughters ; then a mamma with two sons ; then a family too large to count ; and then some score of respectable and agreeable ladies and gentlemen, the chorus of the opera, the figurantes of the ballet, who may fairly be summed up in one general eulogy as very good sort of people in their way.

This *catalogue raisonné* of the Belford gentlefolks does not sound very grand or very intellectual, or very much to boast about ; but yet the component parts, the elements of society, mingled well together, and the result was almost as pleasant as the colonel's inimitable punch—sweet and spirited, with a little acid, and not too much water—or as Sir Charles's champagne, sparkling and effervescent, and completely *up* as his own brilliant spirits and animated character. I was a girl at the time—a very young girl, and, what is more to the purpose, a very shy one, so that I mixed in none of the gaieties ; but, speaking from observation and recollection, I can fairly say that I never saw any society

more innocently cheerful, or more completely free from any other restraints than those of good breeding and propriety. The gentlemen had frequent dinner-parties, and the young people occasional dances at such houses where the rooms were large enough; but the pleasantest meetings were social suppers, preceded by a quiet rubber and a noisy round game, succeeded by one or two national airs, very sweetly sung by the Irishman's wife and the colonel's daughter, enlivened by comic songs by the talking gentleman—a genius in that line, and interspersed with more of fun and jest, and jollity of jokes that nobody could explain, and of laughter no one knew why, than I ever have happened to witness amongst any assemblage of well-behaved and well-educated people. One does sometimes meet with enjoyment amongst a set of country lads and lasses; but to see ladies and gentlemen merry as well as wise, is, in these utilitarian days, somewhat uncommon.

N.B. If I were asked whether this happy state of things still continues, I should find the ques-

tion difficult to answer. Belford is thirty years older since the joyous Christmas holidays which have left so pleasant an impression on my memory, and more than thirty years larger, since it has increased and multiplied, not after the staid and sober fashion of an English country town, but in the ratio of an American city—Cincinnati for instance, or any other settlement of the West, which was the wilderness yesterday, and starts into a metropolis to-morrow. Moreover, I doubt if the habits of the middle ranks in England be as sociable now as they were then. The manners immortalised by Miss Austen are rapidly passing away. There is more of finery, more of literature, more of accomplishment, and, above all, more of pretension, than there used to be. Scandal vanished with the tea-table; gossiping is out of fashion; jokes are gone by; conversation is critical, analytical, political—anything but personal. The world is a wise world, and a learned world, and a scientific world; but not half so merry a world as it was thirty years ago. And then, courteous reader, I too am thirty years older,

which must be taken into the account ; for if those very supper-parties, those identical Christmas holidays, which I enjoyed so much at fourteen, were to return again bodily, with all their “ quips and cranks, and jollity,” it is just a thousand to one but they found the woman of forty-four too grave for them, and longing for the quiet and decorum of the elegant *conversazione* and select dinners of 1834 : of such contradictions is this human nature of ours mingled and composed !

To return once more to Belford, as I remember it at bonny fifteen.

The public amusements of the town were sober enough. Ten years before, clubs had flourished ; and the heads of houses had met once a week at the King’s Arms for the purpose of whist-playing ; whilst the ladies, thus deserted by their liege lords, had established a meeting at each other’s mansions on club-nights, from which, by way of retaliation, the whole male sex was banished except Mr. Singleton. At the time, however, of which I speak, these clubs had passed away ; and the public diver-

sions were limited to an annual visit from a respectable company of actors, the theatre being, as is usual in country places, very well conducted and exceedingly ill attended; to biennial concerts, equally good in their kind, and rather better patronised; and to almost weekly incursions from itinerant lecturers on all the arts and sciences, and from prodigies of every kind, whether three-year-old fiddlers or learned dogs.

There were also balls in their spacious and commodious town-hall, which seemed as much built for the purposes of dancing as for that of trying criminals. Public balls there were in abundance; but at the time of which I speak they were of less advantage to the good town of Belford than any one, looking at the number of good houses and of pretty young women, could well have thought possible. Never was a place in which the strange prejudice, the invisible but strongly felt line of demarcation, which all through England divides the county families from the townspeople, was more rigidly sustained. To live in that respectable borough was in general a recognised exclusion

from the society of the neighbourhood; and if by chance any one so high in wealth, or station, or talent, or connexion, as to set the proscription at defiance, happened to settle within the obnoxious walls, why then the country circle took possession of the new-comer, and he was, although living in the very heart of the borough, claimed and considered as a country family, and seized by the county and relinquished by the town accordingly.* The thing is too absurd to reason upon; but so it was, and so to a great degree it still continues all over England.

A public ball-room is, perhaps, of all others the scene where this feeling is most certain to display itself; and the Belford balls had, from time immemorial, been an arena where the conflicting vanities of the town and county belles had come into collision. A circumstance that had happened some twenty years before the time of which I write (that is to say, nearly fifty

* They order matters rather better now; at least, I know some three or four very delightful persons who, although guilty of living amongst streets and brick-walls, do yet visit in town or country as they see fit; and the ball-room distinction is, I believe, partly swept away—but not quite.

years ago) had, however, ended in the total banishment of the Belford beauties from the field of battle.

Everybody remembers the attack made upon George III. by an unfortunate mad woman of the name of Margaret Nicholson; the quantity of addresses sent up in consequence from all parts of the kingdom; and the number of foolish persons who accompanied the deputations and accepted the honour of knighthood on the occasion. Amongst these simple personages were two aldermen of Belford, a brewer, and a banker, whose daughters, emulous of their fathers' wisdom, were rash enough at the next monthly assembly to take place above the daughters of the high sheriff, and the county members, and half the landed gentry of the neighbourhood. The young country ladies behaved with great discretion; they put a stop to the remonstrances of their partners, walked in a mass to the other end of the room, formed their own set there, and left the daughters of the new-made knights to go down the dance by themselves. But the result was the establish-

ment of subscription balls, under the direction of a county committee, and a complete exclusion, for the time at least, of the female inhabitants of Belford.

By some means or other the gentlemen contrived to creep in as partners, though not much to their own comfort or advantage. The county balls at Belford were amongst the scenes of King Harwood's most notable disappointments ; and a story was in circulation (for the truth of which, however, I will not venture to vouch) that our young diplomatist, who, from the day he first entered Oxford to that in which he left it, had been a tuft-hunter by profession, was actually so deceived, by her being on a visit to a noble family in the neighbourhood, as to request the hand of a young lady for the two first dances, who turned out to be nothing better than the sister of the curate of his own parish, who came the very next week to keep her brother's house, a house of six rooms little better than closets, in Belford, who had not the apology of beauty, and whose surname was Brown !

It follows from this state of things, that in tracing the annals of beauty in the Belford ball-room, in our subsequent pages, our portraits must be chiefly drawn from the young ladies of the neighbourhood, the fair damsels of the town (for of many a fair damsel the good town could boast) having been driven to other scenes for the display of their attractions. I am not sure that they lost many admirers by the exclusion; for a pretty girl is a pretty girl, even if she chance to live amongst houses and brick-walls, instead of trees and green fields, — and, somehow or other, young men will make the discovery. And a pair of bright eyes may do as much execution at a concert, or a lecture, or a horticultural show, or even — with all reverence be it spoken — at a missionary meeting, as if threading the mazes of the old-fashioned country-dance, or *dos-à-dos*-ing in the more fashionable quadrille. Nothing breaks down artificial distinctions so certainly as beauty; and so, or I mistake, our Belford lasses have found.

THE OLD ÉMIGRÉ.

THE town of Belford is, like many of our ancient English boroughs, full of monastic remains, which give an air at once venerable and picturesque to the old irregular streets and suburban gardens of the place. Besides the great ruins of the abbey extending over many acres, and the deep and beautiful arched gateway forming part of an old romantic house which, although erected many centuries later, is now falling to decay, whilst the massive structure of the arch remains firm and vigorous as a rock,*—besides that graceful and shadowy gateway which, with the majestic elms that front it, has formed the subject of

* It was not, I believe, at this gateway, but at one the very remains of which are now swept away, that the abbot and two of his monks were hanged at the time of the Reformation: a most causeless piece of cruelty, since no resistance was offered by the helpless Benedictines.

almost as many paintings and drawings as Durham Cathedral — besides these venerable remains every corner of the town presents some relique of “hoar antiquity” to the eye of the curious traveller. Here, a stack of chimneys, — there, a bit of garden wall, — in this place, a stone porch with the date 1472, — in that, an oaken-raftered granary of still earlier erection — all give token of the solid architecture of the days when the mitred abbots of the great monastery of Belford, where princes have lodged and kings been buried, (as witness the stone coffins not long since disinterred in the ruined chapel,) were the munificent patrons and absolute suzerains of the good burghers and their borough town. Even where no such traces exist, the very names of the different localities indicate their connexion with these powerful Benedictines. Friar Street, Minster Street, the Oriel, the Holy Brook, the Abbey Mills, — names which have long outlived, not only the individual monks, but even the proud foundation by which they were bestowed, — still attest the extensive influence

of the lord abbot. If it be true, according to Lord Byron, that “ words are things,” still more truly may we say that names are histories.

Nor were these remains confined to the town. The granges and parks belonging to the wide-spreading abbey lands, their manors and fisheries, extended for many miles around ; and more than one yeoman, in the remoter villages, claims to be descended of the tenants who held farms under the church ; whilst many a mouldering parchment indicates the assumption of the abbey property by the crown, or its bestowal on some favourite noble of the court. And amidst these reliques of ecclesiastical pomp and wealth, be it not forgotten that better things were mingled,—almshouses for the old, hospitals for the sick, and crosses and chapels at which the pilgrim or the wayfarer might offer up his prayers. One of the latter, dedicated to “ Our Ladye,” was singularly situated on the centre pier of the old bridge at Upton, where, indeed, the original basement, surmounted by a more modern dwelling-house, still continues.

By far the most beautiful ruin in Belford is, however, the east end of an old Friary, situate at the entrance of the town from the pleasant village of Upton above mentioned, from which it is divided by about half a mile of green meadows sloping down to the great river, with its long straggling bridge, sliding, as it were, into an irregular street of cottages, trees, and gardens, terminated by the old church, embosomed in wood, and crowned by the great chalk-pit and the high range of Oxfordshire hills.

The end of the old Friary forming the angle between two of the streets of Belford, and being itself the last building of the town, commands this pretty pastoral prospect. It is placed in about half an acre of ground, partly cultivated as a garden, partly planted with old orchard trees, standing back both from the street on the one side, and the road on the other, apart and divided from every meaner building, except a small white cottage, which is erected against the lower part, and which it surmounts in all the pride of its venerable beauty, retain-

ing almost exactly that form of a pointed arch, to which the groined roof was fitted; almost, but not quite, since on one side part of the stones are crumbling away into a picturesque irregularity, whilst the other is overgrown by large masses of ivy, and the snapdragon and the wallflower have contributed to break the outline. The east window, however, is perfect,—as perfect as if finished yesterday. And the delicate tracery of that window, the rich fretwork of its Gothic carving, clear as point-lace, regular as the quaint cutting of an Indian fan, have to me—especially when the summer sky is seen through those fantastic mouldings, and the ash and elder saplings, which have sprung from the fallen masses below, mingle their fresh and vivid tints with the hoary apple-trees of the orchard, and the fine mellow hue of the weather-stained grey stone—a truer combination of that which the mind seeks in ruins, the union of the beautiful and the sad, than any similar scene with which I am acquainted, however aided by silence and solitude, by majestic woods and mighty waters.

Perhaps the very absence of these romantic adjuncts, the passing at once from the busy hum of men to this memorial of past generations, may aid the impression; or perhaps the associations connected with the small cottage that leans against it, and harmonizes so well in form, and colour, and feeling with the general picture, may have more influence than can belong merely to form and colour in producing the half-unconscious melancholy that steals over the thoughts.

Nothing could be less melancholy than my first recollections of that dwelling, when, a happy school-girl at home for the holidays, I used to open the small wicket, and run up the garden-path, and enter the ever-open door to purchase Mrs. Duval's famous brioches and marangles.

Mrs. Duval had not always lived in the cottage by the Friary. Fifteen years before, she had been a trim, black-eyed maiden, the only daughter and heiress of old Anthony Richards, an eminent confectioner in Queen Street. There she had presided over turtle-

soup and tartlets, ices and jellies—in short, over the whole business of the counter, with much discretion, her mother being dead, and Anthony keeping close to his territory—the oven. With admirable discretion had Miss Fanny Richards conducted the business of the shop; smiling, civil, and attentive to everybody, and yet contriving,—in spite of her gay and pleasant manner, the evident light-heartedness which danced in her sparkling eyes, and her airy steps, and her arch yet innocent speech, a light-heartedness which charmed even the gravest—to avoid any the slightest approach to allurements or coquetry. The most practised recruiting-officer that ever lounged in a country town could not strike up a flirtation with Fanny Richards; nor could the more genuine admiration of the raw boy just come from Eton, and not yet gone to Oxford, extort the slenderest encouragement from the prudent and right-minded maiden. She returned their presents and laughed at their poetry, and had raised for herself such a reputation for civility and propriety, that when the French man-cook

of a neighbouring nobleman, an *artiste* of the first water, made his proposals, and her good father, after a little John Bullish demur on the score of language and country, was won, imitating the example related of some of the old painters to bestow on him his daughter's hand, in reward of the consummate skill of his productions, (a magnificent *Pâté de Périgord* is said to have been the *chef-d'œuvre* which gained the fair prize,) not a family in the town or neighbourhood but wished well to the young nymph of the counter, and resolved to do everything that their protection and patronage could compass for her advantage and comfort.

The excellent character and excellent confectionary of the adroit and agreeable Frenchman completely justified Fanny's choice; and her fond father, from the hour that he chuckingly iced her wedding-cake, and changed his old, homely, black and white inscription of "Anthony Richards, pastry-cook," which had whilom modestly surmounted the shop-window, into a very grand and very illegible scroll, gold on a blue ground, in the old English character, (*Ara-*

besque the bridegroom called it; indeed, if it had been Arabic, it could hardly have been more unintelligible,) of “Anthony Richards and Louis Duval, man-cooks and restorers,” which required the contents of the aforesaid window to explain its meaning to English eyes,—from that triumphant hour to the time of his death, some three years afterwards, never once saw cause to repent that he had entrusted his daughter’s fortune and happiness to a foreigner. So completely was his prejudice surmounted, that when a boy was born, and it was proposed to give him the name of his grandfather, the old man positively refused. “Let him be such another Louis Duval as you have been,” said he, “and I shall be satisfied.”

All prospered in Queen-street, and all deserved to prosper. From the noblemen and gentlemen at whose houses on days of high festival Louis Duval officiated as *chef de cuisine*, down to the urchins of the street, halfpenny customers whose object it was to get most sweets for their money, all agreed that the cookery and the cakery, the soufflés and the buns,

were inimitable. Perhaps the ready and smiling civility, the free and genuine kindness, which looked out and weighed a pennyworth of sugar-plums with an attention as real and as good-natured as that with which an order was taken for a winter dessert, had something to do with this universal popularity. Be that as it may, all prospered, and all deserved to prosper, in Queen-street; and, until the old man died, it would have been difficult, in the town or the country, to fix on a more united or a happier family. That event, by bringing an accession of property and power to Louis Duval, introduced into his mind a spirit of speculation, an ambition (if one may apply so grand a word to the projects of a confectioner), which became as fatal to his fortunes as it has often proved to those of greater men. He became weary of his paltry profits and his provincial success—wearied even of the want of competition, — for poor old Mrs. Thomas, the pastry-cook in the marketplace, an inert and lumpish personage of astounding dimensions, whose fame, such as it was, rested on huge plum-cakes almost as big round as her-

self, and little better than bread with a few currants interspersed, wherewith, under the plea of wholesomeness, poor children were crammed at school and at home, — poor old Mrs. Thomas could never be regarded as his rival; — these motives, together with the wish to try a wider field, and an unlucky suggestion from his old master the Earl, that he and his wife would be the very persons for a London hotel, induced him to call in his debts, dispose of his house and business in Queen-street, embark in a large concern in the West-end, and leave Belford altogether.

The result of this measure may be easily anticipated. Wholly unaccustomed to London, and to that very nice and difficult undertaking, a great hotel, — and with a capital which, though considerable in itself, was yet inadequate to a speculation of such magnitude, — poor Monsieur and Madame Duval (for they had assumed all the Frenchifications possible on setting up in the great city) were tricked, and cheated, and laughed at by her countrymen and by his, and in the course of four years were completely ruined; whilst he, who might always have procured a

decent livelihood by going about to different houses as a professor of the culinary art, (for though Louis had lost every thing else, he had not, as he used to observe, and it was a comfort to him, poor fellow ! lost his professional reputation,) caught cold by overheating himself in cooking a great dinner, fell into a consumption, and died ; leaving his young wife and her little boy friendless and penniless in the wide world.

Under these miserable circumstances, poor Fanny naturally returned to her native town, with some expectation, perhaps, that the patrons and acquaintances of her father and her husband might re-establish her in her old business, for which, having been brought up in the trade, and having retained all the receipts which had made their shop so celebrated, she was peculiarly qualified. But, although surrounded by well-wishers and persons ready to assist her to a certain small extent, Mrs. Duval soon found how difficult it is for any one, especially a woman, to obtain money without security, and without any certainty of repayment. That she had failed once, was reason enough to render

people fearful that she might fail again. Besides, her old rival, Mrs. Thomas, was also dead, and had been succeeded by a Quaker couple, so alert, so intelligent, so accurately and delicately clean in all their looks, and ways, and wares, that the very sight of their bright counter, and its simple but tempting cates, gave their customers an appetite. They were the fashion, too, unluckily. Nothing could go down for luncheon in any family of gentility but Mrs. Purdy's biscuits, and poor Mrs. Duval found her more various and richer confectionary comparatively disregarded. The most that her friends could do for her was to place her in the Friary Cottage, where, besides carrying on a small trade with the few old customers who still adhered to herself and her tartlets, she could have the advantage of letting a small bedchamber and a pleasant little parlour to any lodger desirous of uniting good air, and a close vicinity to a large town, with a situation peculiarly secluded and romantic.

The first occupant of Mrs. Duval's pleasant apartments was a Catholic priest, an *émigré*,

to whom they had a double recommendation, in his hostess's knowledge of the French language, of French habits, and French cookery, (she being, as he used to affirm, the only English-woman that ever made drinkable coffee,) and in the old associations of the precincts ("piece of a cloister") around which the venerable memorials of the ancient faith still lingered even in decay. He might have said, with Antonio, in one of the finest scenes ever conceived by a poet's imagination, that in which the Echo answers from the murdered woman's grave,—

"I do love these ancient ruins ;
 We never tread upon them but we set
 Our foot upon some reverend history ;
 And, questionless, here in this open court
 (Which now lies open to the injuries
 Of stormy weather) some do lie interr'd,
 Loved the church so well, and gave so largely to't,
 They thought it should have canopied their bones
 Till doomsday : but all things have their end :
 Churches and cities (which have diseases like to men)
 Must have like death that we have."

WEBSTER—*Duchess of Malfy.*

If such were the inducements that first attracted M. l'Abbé Villaret, he soon found

others in the pleasing manners and amiable temper of Mrs. Duval, whose cheerfulness and kindness of heart had not abandoned her in her change of fortune; and in the attaching character of her charming little boy, who — singularly tall of his age, and framed with the mixture of strength and delicacy, of pliancy and uprightness, which characterises the ideal forms of the Greek marbles, and the reality of the human figure amongst the aborigines of North America,* and a countenance dark, sallow, and colourless, but sparkling with expression as that of the natives of the South of Europe, the eyes all laughter, the smile all intelligence, — was as unlike in mind as in person to the chubby, ruddy, noisy urchins by whom he was surrounded. Quick, gentle, docile, and graceful to a point of elegance rarely seen even amongst the most carefully-educated children, he might have been placed at court as the page of a fair young queen, and have been the play-

* My readers will remember West's exclamation on the first sight of the Apollo, — "A young Mohawk Indian, by Heaven!"

thing and pet of the maids of honour. The pet of M. l'Abbé he became almost as soon as he saw him; and to that pleasant distinction was speedily added the invaluable advantage of being his pupil.

L'Abbé Villaret had been a cadet of one of the oldest families in France, destined to the church as the birthright of a younger son, but attached to his profession with a seriousness and earnestness not common amongst the gay noblesse of the *ancien régime*, who too often assumed the *petit collet* as the badge of one sort of frivolity, just as their elder brothers wielded the sword, and served a campaign or two, by way of excuse for an idleness and dissipation of a different kind. This devotion had of course been greatly increased by the persecution of the church which distinguished the commencement of the Revolution. The good Abbé had been marked as one of the earliest victims, and had escaped, through the gratitude of an old servant, from the fate which swept off sisters, and brothers, and almost every individual, except himself, of a large and flou-

rishing family. Penniless and solitary, he made his way to England, and found an asylum in the town of Belford, at first assisted by the pittance allowed by our government to those unfortunate foreigners, and subsequently supported by his own exertions as assistant to the priest of the Catholic Chapel in Belford, and as a teacher of the French language in the town and neighbourhood; and so complete had been the ravages of the Revolution in his own family, and so entirely had he established himself in the esteem of his English friends, that when the short peace of Amiens restored so many of his brother *émigrés* to their native land, he refused to quit the country of his adoption, and remained the contented inhabitant of the Friary Cottage.

The contented and most beloved inhabitant, not only of that small cottage, but of the town to which it belonged, was the good Abbé. Everybody loved the kind and placid old man, whose resignation was so real and so cheerful, who had such a talent for making the best of things, whose moral alchymy could extract

some good out of every evil, and who seemed only the more indulgent to the faults and follies of others because he had so little cause to require indulgence for his own. One prejudice he had—a lurking predilection in favour of good blood and long descent; the Duke de St. Simon himself would hardly have felt a stronger partiality for the Montmorencies or the Mortemars; and yet so well was this prejudice governed, so closely veiled from all offensive display, that not only *la belle et bonne bourgeoise* Madame Lane, as he used to call the excellent wife of that great radical leader, but even *le gros bourgeois son époux*, desperate whig as he was, were amongst the best friends and sincerest well-wishers of our courteous old Frenchman. He was their customer for the little meat that his economy and his appetite required; and they were his, for as many French lessons as their rosy, laughing daughters could be coaxed into taking during the very short interval that elapsed between their respectively leaving school and getting married. How the Miss Lanes came to learn French at all, a

piece of finery rather inconsistent with the substantial plainness of their general education, I could not comprehend, until I found that the daughters of Mrs. Green, the grocer, their opposite neighbour, between whom and dear Mrs. Lane there existed a little friendly rivalry, (for, good woman as she was, even Margaret Lane had something of the ordinary frailties of human nature,) were studying French, music, dancing, drawing, and Italian; and, although she quite disapproved of this hash of accomplishments, yet no woman in Christendom could bear to be so entirely outdone by her next neighbour: besides, she doubtless calculated that the little they were likely to know of the language would be too soon forgotten to do them any harm; that they would settle into sober tradesmen's wives, content "to scold their maidens in their mother tongue;" and that the only permanent consequence would be, the giving her the power to be of some slight service to the good *émigré*. So the Miss Lanes learned French; and Mrs. Lane, who was one of poor Mrs. Duval's best friends and most

constant customers, borrowed all her choicest receipts to compound for the Abbé his favourite dishes, and contrived to fix the lessons at such an hour as should authorise her offering the refreshment which she had so carefully prepared. Bijou, too, the Abbé's pet dog, a beautiful little curly spaniel of great sagacity and fidelity, always found a dinner ready for him at Mrs. Lane's; and Louis Duval, his master's other pet, was at least equally welcome;—so that the whole trio were soon at home in the Butts. And although Stephen held in abomination all foreigners, and thought it eminently patriotic and national to hate the French and their ways, never had tasted coffee or taken a pinch of snuff in his days; and although the Abbé, on his part, abhorred smoking, and beer, and punch, and loud talking, and all the John Bullisms whereof Stephen was compounded; although Mr. Lane would have held himself guilty of a sin had he known the French for “how d’ye do?” and the Abbé, teacher of languages though he were, had marvellously contrived to learn no more English

than just served him to make out his pupils' translations (perhaps the constant reading of those incomparable compositions might be the reason why the real spoken idiomatic tongue was still unintelligible to him); yet they did contrive, in spite of their mutual prejudices and their deficient means of communication, to be on as friendly and as cordial terms as any two men in Belford; and, considering that the Frenchman was a decided aristocrat and the Englishman a violent democrat, and that each knew the other's politics, that is saying much.

But from the castle to the cottage, from the nobleman whose children he taught down to the farmer's wife who furnished him with eggs and butter, the venerable Abbé was a universal favourite. There was something in his very appearance—his small neat person, a little bent, more by sorrow than age — his thin white hair — his mild intelligent countenance, with a sweet placid smile, that spoke more of courtesy than of gaiety — his quiet manner, his gentle voice, and even the broken English, which reminded one that he was a sojourner in a strange land,

that awakened a mingled emotion of respect and of pity. His dress, too, always neat, yet never seeming new, contributed to the air of decayed gentility that hung about him; and the beautiful little dog who was his constant attendant, and the graceful boy who so frequently accompanied him, formed an interesting group on the high roads which he frequented; for the good Abbé was so much in request as a teacher, and the amount of his earnings was so considerable, that he might have passed for well-to-do in the world, had not his charity to his poorer countrymen, and his liberality to Louis and to Mrs. Duval, been such as to keep him constantly poor.

Amongst his pupils, and the friends of his pupils, his urbanity and kindness could not fail to make him popular; whilst his gentleness and patience with the stupid, and his fine taste and power of inspiring emulation amongst the cleverer children, rendered him a very valuable master. Besides his large connexion in Belford, he attended, as we have intimated, several families in the neighbourhood, and one or two

schools in the smaller towns, at eight or ten miles' distance; and the light and active old man was accustomed to walk to these lessons, with little Bijou for his companion, even in the depth of winter; depending, it may be, on an occasional cast for himself and his dog in the gig of some good-natured traveller, or the cart of some small farmer or his sturdy dame returning from the market-town, (for it is a characteristic of our county that we abound in female drivers—almost all our country wives are capital whips,) who thought themselves well repaid for their civility by a pinch of rappee in the one case, or a “Tank you, madame!” “Moche obligé, sar!” on the other.

Nobody minded a winter's walk less than M. l'Abbé; and as for Bijou, he delighted in it, and would dance and whisk about, jump round his master's feet, and bark for very joy, whenever he saw the hat brushing, and the great-coat putting on, and the gloves taken out of their drawer, in preparation for a sortie, especially in snowy weather—for Bijou loved a frisk in the snow, and Louis liked it no less.

But there was one person who never liked these cold and distant rambles, and that personage was Mrs. Duval; and on one dreary morning in January, especially, she opposed them by main and by might. She had had bad dreams, too; and Mrs. Duval was the least in the world superstitious; and “she was sure that no good could come of taking such a walk as that to Chardley, full a dozen miles, on such a day — nobody could be so unreasonable as to expect M. l’Abbé in such weather; and as for Miss Smith’s school, Miss Smith’s school might wait!”

M. l’Abbé reasoned with her in vain. “Your dreams — bah! — I must go, my dear little woman. All Miss Smith’s pupils are come back from the holidays, and they want their lessons, and they have brought the money to pay me, and I want the money to pay you, and I will bring you a pink ribbon as bright as your cheeks, and Louis ——”

“Oh, pray let me go with you, M. l’Abbé!” interrupted Louis.

“And Louis shall stay with you,” pursued

M. l'Abbé. "You must not go, my dear boy; stay with your mother; always be a good son to your good mother, and I will bring you a book. I will bring you a new Horace, since you get on so well with your Latin. God bless you, my dear boy! Allons, Bijou!" And M. l'Abbé was setting off.

"At least stay all night!" interposed Mrs. Duval; "don't come home in the dark, pray!"

"Bah!" replied the Abbé, laughing.

"And with money, too! and so many bad people about! and such a dream as I have had!" again exclaimed Madame Duval. "I thought that two wolves——"

"Your dream! bah!" ejaculated the Abbé. "I shall bring you a pink ribbon, and be home by ten." And with these words he and Bijou departed.

Ten o'clock came — a cold, frosty night, not moonlight, but starlight, and with so much snow upon the ground, that the beaten pathway on the high road to Chardley might be easily traced. Mrs. Duval, who had been fidgetty all through the day, became more so as the even-

ing advanced, particularly as Louis importuned her vehemently to let him go and meet their dear lodger.

“ You go ! No, indeed ! ” replied Madame Duval — “ at this time of night, and after my dream ! It’s quite bad enough to have M. l’Abbé wandering about the high roads, and money with him, and so many bad people stirring. I saw one great, tall, dangerous-looking fellow at the door this morning, who seemed as if he had been listening when he talked of bringing money home : I should not wonder if he broke into the house — and my dream, too ! Stay where you are, Louis. I won’t hear of your going.”

And the poor boy, who had been taking down his furred cap to go, looked at his mother’s anxious face, and stayed.

The hours wore away—eleven o’clock struck, and twelve—and still there were no tidings of the Abbé. Mrs. Duval began to comfort herself that he must have stayed to sleep at Chardley ; that the Miss Smiths, whom she knew to be kind women, had insisted on his sleeping at

their house; and she was preparing to go to bed in that persuasion, when a violent scratching and whining was heard at the door, and on Louis running to open it, little Bijou rushed in, covered with dirt, and without his master.

“Oh, my dream!” exclaimed Mrs. Duval. “Louis, I thought that two wolves ——”

“Mother,” interrupted the boy, “see how Bijou is jumping upon me, and whining, and then running to the door, as if to entice me to follow him. I must go.”

“Oh, Louis! remember!” — again screamed his mother — “Remember the great ill-looking fellow who was listening this morning!”

“You forget, dear mother, that we all spoke in French, and that he could not have understood a word,” returned Louis.

“But my dream!” persisted Mrs. Duval. “My dreams always come true. Remember the pot I dreamt of your finding in the ruins, and which, upon digging for, you *did* find.”

“Which you dreamt was a pot of gold, and which turned out to be a broken paint-pot,” replied Louis impatiently. “Mother,” added

he, "I am sorry to disobey you, but see how this poor dog is dragging me to the door; hark how he whines! And look! look! there is blood upon his coat! Perhaps his master has fallen and hurt himself, and even my slight help may be of use. I must go, and I will."

And following the word with the deed, Louis obeyed the almost speaking action of the little dog, and ran quickly out of the house, on the road to Chardley. His mother, after an instant of vague panic, recovered herself enough to alarm the neighbours, and send more efficient help than a lad of eleven years old to assist in the search.

With a beating heart the brave and affectionate boy followed the dog, who led with a rapid pace and an occasional low moan along the high road to Chardley. The night had become milder, the clouds were driving along the sky, and a small, sleety rain fell by gusts; all, in short, bespoke an approaching thaw, although the ground continued covered with snow, which cast a cold, dreary light on every object. For nearly three miles Louis and

Bijou pursued their way alone. At the end of that time, they were arrested by shouts and lanterns advancing rapidly from the town, and the poor lad recognized the men whom his mother had sent to his assistance.

“Any news of the poor French gentleman, master?” inquired John Gleve, the shoemaker, as he came up, almost breathless with haste. “It’s lucky that I and Martin had two pair of boots to finish, and had not left our work; for poor Mrs. Duval there is half crazy with her fears for him and her dread about you. How couldst thou think of running off alone? What good could a lad like thee do, frightening his poor mother?—And yet one likes un for ’t,” added John, softening as he proceeded in his harangue; “one likes un for ’t mainly. But look at the dog!” pursued he, interrupting himself; “look at the dog, how he ’s snuffing and shuffling about in the snow! And hark how he whines and barks, questing like! And see what a trampling there’s been here, and how the snow on the side of the path is trodden about!”

“Hold down the lantern!” exclaimed

Louis. "Give me the light, I beseech you. Look here ! this is blood—*his* blood !" sobbed the affectionate boy ; and, guided partly by that awful indication, partly by the disturbed snow, and partly by the dog, who, trembling in every limb, and keeping up a low moan, still pursued the track, they clambered over a gate into a field by the road-side ; and in a ditch, at a little distance, found what all expected to find—the lifeless body of the Abbé.

He had been dead apparently for some hours ; for the corpse was cold, and the blood had stiffened on two wounds in his body. His pockets had been rifled of his purse and his pocket-book, both of which were found, with what money might have been in them taken out, cast into the hedge at a small distance, together with a sword with a broken hilt, with which the awful deed had probably been committed. Nothing else had been taken from the poor old man. His handkerchief and snuff-box were still in his pocket, together with three yards of rose-coloured ribbon, neatly wrapped in paper, and a small edition of Horace, with

the leaves uncut. It may be imagined with what feelings Mrs. Duval and Louis looked at these tokens of recollection. Her grief found in tears the comfortable relief which Heaven has ordained for woman's sorrow ; but Louis could not cry—the consolation was denied him. A fierce spirit of revenge had taken possession of the hitherto gentle and placid boy : to discover and bring to justice the murderer, and to fondle and cherish poor Bijou (who was with difficulty coaxed into taking food, and lay perpetually at the door of the room which contained his old master's body), seemed to be the only objects for which Louis lived.

The wish to discover the murderer was general throughout the neighbourhood where the good, the pious, the venerable old man—harmless and inoffensive in word and deed, just, and kind, and charitable—had been so truly beloved and respected. Large rewards were offered by the Catholic gentry,* and every

* I cannot name the Catholic gentry without paying my humble but most sincere tribute of respect to the singularly high character of the old Catholic families in this

exertion was made by the local police, and the magistracy of the town and country, to accomplish this great object. John Gleve had accu-

county. It seems as if the oppression under which they so long laboured, had excited them to oppose to such injustice the passive but powerful resistance of high moral virtue, of spotless integrity, of chivalrous honour, and of a diffusive charity, which their oppressors would have done well to imitate. Amongst them are to be found the names of Throckmorton, the friend and patron of Cowper, and of Blount, so wound up with every recollection of Pope, and of Eyston, of East Hendrid, more ancient, perhaps, than any house in the county, whose curious old chapel, appended to his mansion, is mentioned in a deed bearing date the 19th of May, A. D. 1323, now in the possession of the family. Nothing can be more interesting than the account, in a MS. belonging to Mr. Eyston, of the re-opening of this chapel during the short period in which the Roman Catholic religion was tolerated under James the Second; and of the persecution which succeeded at the Revolution. These scenes are now matters of history, and of history only; since the growing wisdom and the humanizing spirit of the legislature and the age forbid even the fear of their recurrence; but as curious historical documents, and as a standing lesson against bigotry and intolerance, however styled, a collection of such narratives (and many such, I believe, exist amongst the old Catholic families,) would be very valuable. One of the most remarkable MSS. that I have happened to meet with, is an account of the life and character of Sir Francis Englefyld, Knt. privy counsellor to Queen

rately measured the shoe-marks to and from the ditch where the body was found; but farther than the gate of the field they had not

Mary, who retired into Spain to escape from the persecutions of Elizabeth, and died in an exile which he shared with many of his most eminent countrymen. He also belonged to our neighbourhood; the family of Englefield, now extinct, being the ancient possessors of Whiteknights. The Catholic gentleman, however, of our own day, whom Belford has the greatest cause to rank amongst its benefactors, is our neighbour—I will venture to say our friend—Mr. Wheble, a man eminently charitable, liberal, and enlightened, whose zeal for his own church, whilst it does not impede the exercise of the widest and most diffusive benevolence towards the professors of other forms of faith, has induced him to purchase all that could be purchased of the ruins of the great abbey, and to rescue the little that was still undesecrated by the prison, the school, and the wharf. Of these fine remains of the splendour and the piety of our ancestors, the beautiful arch and the site of the abbey-church are fortunately amongst the portions thus preserved from baser uses. It is impossible not to sympathise strongly with the feeling which dictated this purchase, and equally impossible not to lament, if only as a matter of taste, that there was no such guardian hand fifty years ago, to prevent the erection of the county gaol, and the subsequent introduction of quays and national schools amongst some of the most extensive and finely-situated monastic ruins in England, now irreparably contaminated by objects the most unsightly, and associations the most painful and degrading.

thought to trace the footsteps; and a thaw having come on, all signs had disappeared before the morning. It had been ascertained that the Miss Smiths had paid him, besides some odd money, in two 10*l.* notes of the Chardley bank, the numbers of which were known; but of them no tidings could be procured. He had left their house, on his return, about six o'clock in the evening, and had been seen to pass through a turnpike-gate, midway between the two towns, about eight, when, with his usual courtesy, he bade a cheerful good-night to the gate-keeper; and this was the last that had been heard of him. No suspicious person had been observed in the neighbourhood; the most sagacious and experienced officers were completely at fault; and the coroner's inquest was obliged to bring in the vague and unsatisfactory verdict of "Found murdered, by some person or persons unknown."

Many loose people, such as beggars and vagrants, and wandering packmen, were, however, apprehended, and obliged to give an account of themselves; and on one of these, a

rag-man, called James Wilson, something like suspicion was at last fixed. The sword with which the murder was committed, an old regimental sword, with the mark and number of the regiment ground out, had, as I have said before, a broken hilt ; and round this hilt was wound a long strip of printed calico, of a very remarkable pattern, which a grocer's wife in Belford, attracted by the strange curiosity with which vulgar persons pursue such sights, to go and look at it as it lay exposed for recognition on a table in the Town Hall, remembered to have seen in the shape of a gown on the back of a girl who had lived with her a twelvemonth before ; and the girl, on being sought out in a neighbouring village, deposed readily to having sold the gown, several weeks back, to the rag-man in question. The measure of the shoes also fitted ; but they unluckily were of a most common shape and size. Wilson brought a man from the paper-mill to prove that the entire gown in question had been carried there by him, with other rags, about a month before ; and called other witnesses, who made out a

complete alibi on the night in question ; so that the magistrates, although strongly prejudiced against him, from countenance and manner,—the down look and the daring audacity with which nature, or rather evil habit, often stamps the ruffian,—were, after several examinations, on the point of discharging him, when young Louis, who had attended the whole inquiry with an intelligence and an intensity of interest which, boy as he was, had won for him the privilege of being admitted even to the private examinations of the magistrates, and whose ill opinion of Wilson had increased every hour, he himself hardly knew why, suddenly exclaimed, “ Stop until I bring a witness !” and darted out of the room.

During the interval of his absence,—for such was the power of the boy’s intense feeling and evident intelligence, that the magistrates *did* stop for him,—one of the police-officers happened to observe how tightly the prisoner grasped his hat. “ Is it mere anger ?” thought he within himself ; “ or is it agitation ? or can they have been such fools as not to search the

lining?" — "Let me look at that hat of yours, Wilson," said he aloud.

"It has been searched," replied Wilson, still holding it. "What do you want with the hat?"

"I want to see the lining."

"There is no lining," replied the prisoner, grasping it still tighter.

"Let me look at it, nevertheless. Take it from him," rejoined the officer. "Ah, ha! here is a little ragged bit of lining, though, sticking pretty fast too; for as loose and as careless as it looks,—a fine, cunning hiding-place! Give me a knife—a penknife!" said the myrmidon of justice, retiring with his knife and the hat to the window, followed by the eager looks of the prisoner, whose attention, however, was immediately called to a nearer danger, by the return of Louis, with little Bijou in his arms. The poor dog flew at him instantly, barking, growling, quivering, almost shrieking with fury, bit his heels and his legs, and was with difficulty dragged from him, so strong had passion made the faithful creature.

“ Look !” said Louis. “ I brought him from his master’s grave to bear witness against his murderer. Look !”

“ Their worships will hardly commit me on the evidence of a dog,” observed Wilson, recovering himself.

“ But see here,” rejoined the police-officer, producing two dirty bits of paper, most curiously folded, from the old hat. “ Here are the two Chardley notes—the 10*l.* notes—signed David Williams, Nos. 1025 and 662. What do you say to that evidence? You and the little dog are right, my good boy: this is the murderer, sure enough. There can be no doubt about committing him now.”

It is hardly necessary to add that James Wilson was committed, or that proof upon proof poured in to confirm his guilt and discredit his witnesses. He died confessing the murder; and Bijou and Louis, somewhat appeased by having brought the criminal to justice, found comfort in their mutual affection, and in a tender recollection of their dear old friend and master.

Note.—Not to go back to the dog of Montargis, and other well-attested accounts of murderers detected by dogs, I can bring a living spaniel to corroborate the fact, that these faithful and sagacious animals do seek assistance for their masters when any evil befalls them. The story, as told to me by Bramble's present mistress, whom I have the great pleasure to reckon amongst my friends, is as follows—:

The blacksmith of a small village in Buckinghamshire went blind, and was prevented from pursuing his occupation. He found, however, a friend in a surgeon of the neighbourhood, a man of singular kindness and benevolence, who employed him to carry out medicines, which he was enabled to do by the aid of a dog and a chain. But old John was a severe master, and of his dogs many died, and many ran away. At last, he had the good fortune to light upon our friend Bramble, a large black-and-white spaniel, of remarkable symmetry and beauty, with wavy hair, very long ears, feathered legs and a bushy tail, and with sagacity and fidelity equal to his beauty. Under

Bramble's guidance, blind John performed his journeys in perfect safety; wherever the poor dog had been once, he was sure to know his way again; and he appeared to discover, as if by instinct, to what place his master wished to go. One point of his conduct was peculiarly striking. He constantly accompanied his master to church, and lay there perfectly quiet during the whole service. For three years that he formed regularly one of the congregation, he was never known to move or to make the slightest noise.

One bitter night, old John had been on a journey to Woburn, and not returning at his usual hour, the relations with whom he lived went to bed, as it was not uncommon for the blind man, when engaged on a longer expedition than common, to sleep from home. The cottage accordingly was shut up, and the inhabitants, tired with labour, went to bed and slept soundly. The people at a neighbouring cottage, however, fancied that they heard, during the long winter night, repeated howlings as of a dog in distress; and when they rose in the

morning, the first thing they heard was, that old John lay dead in a ditch not far from his own door. The poor dog was found close by the body ; and it was ascertained by the marks on the path, that he had dragged his chain backward and forward from the ditch to the cottage, in the vain hope of procuring such assistance as might possibly have saved his master.

Luckily for Bramble, the benevolent surgeon, always his very good friend, was called in to examine if any spark of life remained in the body ; and he having ascertained that poor John was fairly dead, told the story of the faithful dog to his present excellent mistress, with whom Bramble is as happy as the day is long.

It is comfortable to meet with a bit of that justice which, because it is so rare, people call poetical, in real actual life ; and I verily believe that in this case Bramble's felicity is quite equal to his merits, high as they undoubtedly are. The only drawback that I have ever heard hinted at, is a tendency on his part to grow over fat ; a misfortune which doubtless re-

sults from his present good feed, coming after a long course of starvation.

Now that I am telling stories of dogs, I cannot resist the temptation of recording one short anecdote of my pet spaniel Dash, a magnificent animal, of whose beauty I have spoken elsewhere, and who really does all but speak himself.

Every May I go to the Silchester woods, to gather wild lilies of the valley. Last year the numbers were, from some cause or other, greatly diminished: the roots, it is true, were there, but so scattered over the beautiful terraces of that unrivalled amphitheatre of woods, and the blossoms so rare, that in the space of several acres, thinly covered with the plants and their finely lined transparent green leaves, it was difficult to procure half-a-dozen of those delicate flower-stalks hung with snowy bells, and amidst the shifting lights and shadows of the coppice, where the sunbeams seemed to dance through the branches, still more difficult to discover the few that there were. I went searching drearily through the wood, a little weary of seeking and not find-

ing, when Dash, who had been on his own devices after pheasants and hares, returning to me, tired with his sort of sport, began to observe mine; and at once discerning my object and my perplexity, went gravely about the coppice, lily hunting; finding them far more quickly than I did, stopping, wagging his tail, and looking round at me by the side of every flower, until I came and gathered it; and then, as soon as I had secured one, pursuing his search after another, and continuing to do so without the slightest intermission until it was time to go home. I am half afraid to tell this story, although it is as true as that there are lilies in Silchester wood; and the anecdote of Cowper's dog Beau and the water-lily is somewhat of a case in point. Whether Dash found the flowers by scent or by sight, I cannot tell: probably by the latter.

THE TAMBOURINE.

A CHEESE-FAIR ADVENTURE.

EVERYBODY likes a fair. Some people indeed, especially of the order called fine ladies, pretend that they do not. But go to the first that occurs in their neighbourhood, and there, amongst the thickest of the jostling crowd, with staring carters treading upon their heels, and grinning farmers' boys rubbing against their petticoats,—there, in the very middle of the confusion, you shall be sure to find them, fine ladies though they be ! They still, it is true, cry “How disagreeable !”—but there they are.

Now, the reasons against liking a fair are far more plausible than those on the other side : the dirt, the wet, the sun, the rain, the wind, the noise, the cattle, the crowd, the cheats, the

pickpockets, the shows with nothing worth seeing, the stalls with nothing worth buying, the danger of losing your money, the certainty of losing your time, — all these are valid causes for dislike ; whilst in defence of the fair there is little more to plead than the general life of the scene, the pleasure of looking on so many happy faces, the consciousness that one day at least in the year is the peasant's holiday — and the undeniable fact, that, deny it as they may, all English people, even the cold fine lady, or the colder fine gentleman, do at the bottom of their hearts like a fair. It is a taste, or a want of taste, that belongs to the national temperament, is born with us, grows up with us, and will never be got rid of, let fashion declaim against it as she may.

The great fair at Belford had, however, even higher pretensions to public favour than a deep-rooted old English feeling. It was a scene of business as well as of amusement, being not only a great market for horses and cattle, but one of the principal marts for the celebrated cheese of the great dairy counties. Factors

from the West and dealers from London arrived days before the actual fair-day; and waggon after waggon, laden with the round, hard, heavy merchandise rumbled slowly into the Forbury, where the great space before the school-house, the whole of the boys' play-ground, was fairly covered with stacks of Cheddar and North Wilts. Fancy the singular effect of piles of cheeses several feet high, extending over a whole large cricket-ground, and divided only by narrow paths littered with straw, amongst which wandered the busy chapmen, offering a taste of their wares to their cautious customers the country shopkeepers (who poured in from every village within twenty miles), and the thrifty housewives of the town, who, bewildered by the infinite number of samples, which to an uneducated palate seemed all alike, chose at last almost at random! Fancy the effect of this remarkable scene, surrounded by cattle, horses, shows, and people, the usual moving picture of a fair; the fine Gothic church of St. Nicholas on one side; the old arch of the abbey, and the abrupt eminence called Forbury Hill, crowned

by a grand clump of trees, on the other ; the Mall, with its row of old limes and its handsome houses, behind ; and in front, the great river flowing slowly through green meadòws, and backed by the high ridge of Oxfordshire hills ; —imagine this brilliant panorama, and you will not wonder that the most delicate ladies braved the powerful fumes of the cheese—an odour so intense that it even penetrated the walls and windows of the school-house—to contemplate the scene. When lighted up at night, it was perhaps still more fantastic and attractive, particularly before the Zoological gardens had afforded a home to the travelling wild beasts, whose roars and howlings at feeding-time used to mingle so grotesquely with the drums, trumpets and fiddles of the dramatic and equestrian exhibitions, and the laugh and shout and song of the merry visitors.

A most picturesque scene, of a truth, was the Belford cheese-fair ; and not always unprofitable : at least, I happen to know one instance, where, instead of having his pocket picked by the light-fingered gentry, whom mobs of all

sorts are sure to collect, an honest person of my acquaintance was lucky enough to come by his own again, and recover in that unexpected place a piece of property of which he had been previously defrauded.

The case was as follows:—

The male part of our little establishment consists not of one man-servant, as is usual with persons of small fortune and some gentility, who keep, like that other poor and genteel personage yclept Don Quixote, a horse and a brace of greyhounds (to say nothing of my own pony phaeton and my dog Dash), but of two boys—the one a perfect pattern of a lad of fifteen or thereabout, the steadiest, quietest, and most serviceable youth that ever bore the steady name of John; the other, an urchin called Ben, some two years younger, a stunted dwarf, or rather a male fairy—Puck, or Robin Goodfellow, for instance—full of life and glee, and good-humour, and innocent mischief—a tricksy spirit, difficult to manage, but kindly withal, and useful after his own fashion, though occasionally betrayed into mistakes by over-

shrewdness, just as other boys blunder from stupidity. Instead of conveying a message word for word as delivered, according to the laudable practice of the errand gods and goddesses, the Mercurys and Irises in Homer's immortal poems,* Master Ben hath a trick of thinking for his master, and clogging his original missive with certain amendments or additional clauses hatched in his own fertile brain.

Occasionally, also, he is rather super-subtle in his rigid care of his master's interest, and exercises an over-scrupulous watchfulness in cases where less caution would be more agreeable. At this very last fair, for instance, we had a horse to sell, which was confided to a neighbouring farmer to dispose of, with the usual charges against being overreached in his bargain, or defrauded of the money when sold. "I'll see to that," responded Ben, taking the words out of the mouth of the slow, civil farmer

* "The schoolmaster is abroad!" If ever he arrive at the point of teaching Greek to the future inmates of the kitchen, the stable, and the servants' hall, which really seems not unlikely, I hope he will direct their particular attention to those parts of the Iliad and Odyssey.

Giles,—“I’ll see to that;” I’m to ride the mare, and nobody shall get her from me without the money.” Off they set accordingly, and the horse, really a fine animal, was speedily sold to a neighbouring baronet, a man of large estate in the county, who sent his compliments to my father, and that he would call and settle for him in a day or two. This message perfectly satisfied our chapman the farmer, but would by no means do for Ben, who insisted on receiving the money before delivering the steed; and after being paid by a check on the county banker, actually rode to the bank to make sure of the cash before he would give up his charge, either to the amazed Sir Robert or his wondering groom. “I suppose, Ben, you did not know Sir Robert?” inquired his master, rather scandalized, when Ben, finding him out in the fair, handed him the money triumphantly, and told his story. “Lord, sir,” rejoined Ben, “I knew him as well as I know you; but great people’s money is sometimes as hard to get as poor ones; besides, this Sir Robert is a prodigal chap,

dresses as smart and talks as fine as his valet — 'twas best to secure the money if he were ten times over a baronet. You can tell him, though, that I did not know him, if you like, sir, the next time you meet." And the white fib was told accordingly, and the affront happily got over.

This fact, however illustrative of Master Ben's general character, has nothing to do with our present story, though, as the *dénouement* of the tambourine adventure took place on the same day, the two legends may be considered as in some small degree connected.

Amongst Ben's other peculiarities was a strong faculty of imitation, which he possessed in common with monkeys, magpies, and other clever and mischievous animals, but which, in his particular case, applied as it generally was to copying, so correct a model as John served as a sort of counterpoise to his more volatile propensities, something like the ballast to the ship, or the balance-wheel to the machinery. The point to which this was carried was really ludicrous. If you saw John in the garden car-

rying a spade, you were pretty sure to see Ben following him armed with a rake. When John watered my geraniums after the common fashion of pouring water into the pots, Ben kept close behind him, with a smaller implement, pouring the refreshing element into the pans. Whilst John washed one wheel of my pony phaeton, Ben was, at the self-same moment, washing another. Were a pair of shoes sent to be blacked, so sure as John assumed the brush to polish the right shoe, Ben took possession of the left. He cleaned the forks to John's knives ; and if a coat were to be beaten, you were certain to hear the two boys thumping away at once on different sides.

Of course, if this propensity were observable in their work, it became infinitely more so in their amusements. If John played marbles, so did Ben ; if cricket, there, in the same game, and on the same side, was Ben. If the one went a-nutting, you were sure in the self-same copse to find his faithful adherent ; and when John last winter bought a fiddle and took to learning music, it followed, as a matter of neces-

sity, that Ben should become musical also. The only difficulty was the choice of an instrument. A fiddle was out of the question, not only because the price was beyond his finances, and larger than any probable sum out of which he could reasonably expect to coax those who wrongfully enough were accused of spoiling him—the young gentleman being what is vulgarly called spoiled long before he came into their hands—but because Master Ben had a very rational and well-founded doubt of his own patience, (John, besides his real love of the art, being naturally of a plodding disposition, widely different from the mercurial temperament of his light-hearted and light-headed follower,) and desired to obtain some implement of sound, (for he was not very particular as to its sweetness), on which he might with all possible speed obtain sufficient skill to accompany his comrade in his incessant, and at first most untunable, practice.

Ben's original trial was on an old battered flageolet, bestowed upon him by the ostler at the Rose, for whom he occasionally performed

odd jobs, which at first was obstinately mute in spite of all his blowings, and when it did become vocal under his strenuous efforts, emitted such a series of alternate shrieks, and groans, and squeaks, as fairly frightened the neighbourhood, and made John stop his ears. So Ben found it convenient to put aside that instrument, which, in spite of the ostler's producing from it a very respectable imitation of "Auld Lang Syne," Ben pronounced to be completely good for nothing.

His next attempt was on a flute, which looked sufficiently shapeable and glittering to have belonged to a far higher performer, and which was presented to him by our excellent neighbour Mr. Murray's smart footman, who being often at our house with notes and messages from his mistress, had become captivated, like his betters, by Ben's constant gaiety and good-humour—the delightful festivity of temper and fearless readiness of wit, which rendered the poor country-boy so independent, so happy, and so enviable. Mr. Thomas presented his superb flute to Ben — and Ben tried for three

whole days to make it utter any sound — but, alas ! he tried in vain. So he honestly and honourably returned the gift to Mr. Thomas, with a declaration “ that he had no doubt but the flute was an excellent flute, only that he had not breath to play on it ; he was afraid of his lungs.” Ben afraid of his lungs ! whose voice could be heard of a windy day from one end of the village street to the other — ay, to the very hill-top, rising over all the din of pigs, geese, children, carriages, horses, and cows ! Ben in want of breath ! Ben ! whose tongue, during the whole four-and-twenty hours, was never still for a moment, except when he was asleep, and who even stood suspected of talking in his dreams ! Ben in want of breath ! However, he got out of the scrape, by observing, that it was only common civility to his friend, Mr. Thomas, to lay the fault on himself rather than on the flute, which, as Ben sagaciously, and, I think, truly observed, was like the razors of the story, “ made for sale and not for use.”

The next experiment was more successful.

It so happened that a party of gipsies had

pitched their tent and tethered their donkeys in Kibes-lane, and fowls were disappearing from the henroost, and linen vanishing from the clothes-line, as is usual where an encampment of that picturesque* but slippery order of vagabonds takes place. The party in question consisted as usual of tall, lean, suspicious-looking men, an aged sibyl or two of fortune-telling aspect, two or three younger women with infants at their backs, and children of all

* Besides their eminent picturesqueness, there is a poetical feeling about these wandering tribes, that can hardly fail to interest. The following anecdote, illustrative of this fact, is new to me, and may be so to my readers:—One fine spring morning, a friend of mine saw a young gipsy-girl jumping and clapping her hands, and shouting to an elderly female, “I have done it! I have done it!”—“Done what?” inquired my friend.—“Set my foot on nine daisies at once, ma’am,” was the reply; and then she and the elder one began chanting a song, the burthen of which was, as nearly as their auditress could recollect, as follows:

“ Summer is come,
 With the daisy bud,
 To gladden our tents
 By the merry green wood;
 Summer is come! Summer is come!”

ages and sizes, from fifteen downwards. One lad, apparently about our hero's age, but considerably larger, had struck up an acquaintance with Ben, who used to pass that way to fetch a dole of milk from our kind neighbours the Murrays, and usually took his master's greyhounds with him for company: and had made sufficient advances towards familiarity to challenge him to a coursing expedition, promising that their curs should find hares, provided the greyhounds would catch them; and even endeavouring to pique him on the point of honour (for Ben was obviously proud of his beautiful and high-bred dogs), by insinuating that the game might be more easily found than caught. Ben, however, too conversant with the game-laws to fall into the snare, laughed at the gipsy-boy, and passed quietly on his way

The next day, Dick (for such was the name of his new acquaintance) made an attack upon Ben, after a different fashion, and with a more favourable result.

Perched on a knoll, under a fine clump of oaks, at a turning of the lane, stood the gipsy-

boy, beating the march in Bluebeard, with the most approved flourishes, on a tambourine of the largest size. Ben was enchanted. He loitered to listen, stopped to admire, proceeded to question Dick as to the ownership of the instrument, and on finding that this splendid implement of noise was the lad's own property, and to be sold to the best bidder, commenced a chaffering and bargaining, which in its various modifications of beating down on one side, and crying up on the other, and pretended indifference on both, lasted five days and a half, and finally became the happy possessor of the tambourine, for the sum of four shillings—half a guinea having been the price originally demanded.

Who now so triumphant as Ben! The tambourine (though greatly the worse for wear) was still a most efficient promoter of din, and for four-and-twenty hours (for I really believe that during the first night of its belonging to him the boy never went to bed) it was one incessant tornado of beating, jingling, and rumbling—the whole house was deafened by the

intolerable noise which the enraptured tambourinist was pleased to call music. At the end of that time the parchment (already pretty well worn) fairly cracked, as well it might, under such unmerciful pommelling, and a new head, as Ben called it, became necessary. It had been warranted to wear for six months, under pain of forfeiting eighteen-pence by the former possessor; but on repairing to Kibe's lane, Dick and his whole tribe, tents, donkeys, and curs, had disappeared, and the evil was so far without remedy. The purchaser had exhausted his funds; everybody was too much out of humour with the noise to think of contributing money to promote its renewal, and any other boy would have despaired.

But Ben was a lad of resource. Amongst his various friends and patrons, he numbered the groom of an eminent solicitor in Belford, to whom he stated his case, begging him to procure for him some reversionary parchment, stained, or blotted, or discoloured, or what not—any thing would do, so that it were whole; and the groom was interested, and stated the case to

the head clerk ; and the clerk was amused, and conveyed the petition to his master ; and the master laughed, and sent Ben forthwith a cancelled deed ; and the tambourine was mended ; and for another four-and-twenty hours we were stunned.

At the end of that time, having laid down the instrument from pure weariness, his left arm being stiff from holding and tossing, and his right knuckles raw from thumping, Ben deposited his beloved treasure in a nook which he had especially prepared for it in the stable ; and on going to pay it a visit the next morning, the dear tambourine was gone — vanished — stolen—lost, as we all thought, for ever ! and poor Ben was so grieved at the loss of his plaything, that, nuisance as the din had been, we could not help being sorry too, and had actually commissioned him to look out for another second-hand instrument, and promised to advance the purchase-money, when the aspect of affairs was suddenly changed by the adventure before alluded to, which occurred at the great cheese-fair at Belford.

After receiving the money from Sir Robert—or rather, after getting his check cashed at the bank, and delivering the horse to the groom, as I have before stated,—Ben having transferred the notes to his master, and received half-a-crown to purchase a fairing, proceeded to solace himself by taking a leisurely view of the different shows, and having laughed at Punch, stared at the wild-beasts, and admired the horsemanship, was about to enter a booth, to enjoy the delight of a threepenny play, when, on a platform in front, where the characters, in full costume, were exhibiting themselves to attract an audience to the entertainment about to commence, he was struck by the apparition of a black boy in a turban, flourishing a tambourine, and in spite of the change of colour in the player, and a good deal of new gilding on the instrument, was instantly convinced that he beheld his quondam friend Dick the gipsy, and his own beloved tambourine!

Ben was by no means a person to suffer such a discovery to pass unimproved; he clambered on the railing that surrounded the booth,

leaped on the platform, seized at one clutch the instrument and the performer, and in spite of the resistance offered by a gentleman in a helmet and spangles, a most Amazonian lady in a robe and diadem, and a personage, sex unknown, in a pair of silver wings, gold trousers, and a Brutus wig, he succeeded in mastering the *soi-disant* negro-boy, and raising such a clamour as brought to his assistance a troop of constables and other officials, and half the mob of the fair.

Ben soon made known his grievance. "He's no blackamoor!" shouted the lad, dexterously cleaning with a wetted finger part of the cheek of the simulated African, and discovering the tanned brown skin underneath. "He's a thief and a gipsy! And this is my tambourine! I can prove the fact!" roared Ben. "I can swear to the parchment, and so can lawyer Lyons," added Ben (displaying the mutilated but clerk-like writing, by which Simon Lackland, Esq. assigned over to Daniel Holdfast, Gent. the manor and demesnes, woods and fisheries, parklands and pightles, of Flyaway, in considera-

tion, and so forth). “ I can swear to my tambourine, and so can my master, and so can the lawyer ! Take us to the bench ! Carry us before the Mayor ! I can swear to the tambourine, and the thief who is playing it, who is no more a negro than I am !” pursued Ben, sweeping off another streak of the burnt cork from the sunburnt face of the luckless Dick. “ I’m Doctor M.’s boy,” bawled Ben, “ and he’ll see me righted, and the tambourine’s mine, and I’ll have it !”

And have it he did ; for the lawyer and his master both happened to be within hearing, and bore satisfactory testimony to his veracity ; and the mob, who love to administer summary justice, laid hold of the culprit, whom Ben, having recovered his property, was willing to let off scot-free, and amused themselves with very literally washing the blackamoor white by means of a sound ducking in the nearest horse-pond. And the tambourine was brought home in triumph ; and we are as much stunned as ever.

MRS. HOLLIS, THE FRUITERER.

At the corner of St. Stephen's church-yard, forming a sort of angle at the meeting of four roads, stands a small shop, the front abutting on the open space caused by the crossing of the streets, one side looking into the Butts, the other into the church-yard, and one end only connected with other houses; a circumstance which, joined to the three open sides being, so to say, glazed—literally composed of shop-windows, gives an agreeable singularity to the little dwelling of our fruiterer. By day it looks something like a greenhouse, or rather, like the last of a row of stove-houses; and the resemblance is increased by the contents of the shop-windows, consisting of large piled-up plates of every fruit in season, interspersed with certain pots of plants which, in that kind of atmo-

sphere, never blow, — outlandish plants, names unknown, whose green, fleshy, regular leaves have a sort of fruity-look with them, seem as if intended to be eaten, and assort wonderfully well with the shaddocks, dates, cocoa-nuts, pine-apples, and other rare and foreign fruits, amongst which they stand. By night it has the air of a Chinese lantern, all light and colour; and whether by night or by day, during full eight months of the year, that ever-open door sends forth the odours of countless chests of oranges, with which above all other productions of the earth the little shop is filled, and which come steaming across the pavement like a perfume.

I have an exceeding affection for oranges and the smell of oranges in every shape: the leaf, the flower, the whole flowering tree, with its exquisite elegance,* its rare union of richness

* So elegant is it, that the very association connected with it will sometimes confer a grace not its own. For instance, an indifferent play called *Elvira*, taken from the Spanish some two hundred years ago by George Digby Earl of Bristol, is really made tasteful by the scene being laid partly amongst the orange-groves of a Spanish garden, and partly in the “perfuming room,” a hall, or laboratory, where the flowers were distilled, and in which the mistress

and delicacy, and its aristocratic scarcity and unwillingness to blossom, or even to grow in this climate, without light and heat, and shelter and air, and all the appliances which its sweetness and beauty so well deserve. I even love that half-evergreen, flexible honeysuckle, with the long wreaths of flowers, which does condescend to spread and flourish, and even to blow for half the year, all the better, because its fragrance approaches nearer to that of the orange blossom than any other that I know : and the golden fruit with its golden rind, I have loved both for the scent and the taste from the day when a tottering child, laughing and reaching after the prize which I had scarcely words

~~sets~~ one of her attendants, a lady in disguise, the pretty task of gathering and changing the flowers. No one can conceive the effect of this tasteful fixing of the scene, in heightening and ennobling the female characters. Our own greenhouses were originally built for tender evergreens, chiefly oranges and myrtles ; and an orangery is still one of the rarest and most elegant appurtenances to a great house. Some of my happiest days were spent in that belonging to Belford Manor-house, looking out from amid orange-trees, second only to those at Hampton Court, on gay flowers, green trees, and a bright river, in the sunny month of June, and enjoying society worthy of the scenery.

enough to ask for, it was doled out to me in quarters, through the time when, a little older, I was promoted to the possession of half an orange to my own share, and that still prouder hour when I attained the object of my ambition, and had a whole orange to do what I liked with, up to this very now, when, if oranges were still things to sigh for, I have only to send to Mrs. Hollis's shop, and receive in return for one shilling, lawful money of Great Britain, more of the golden fruit than I know what to do with. Everybody has gone through this chapter of the growth and vanity of human wishes — has longed for the fruit, not only for its own sweetness, but as a mark of property and power, which vanish when possessed — great to the child, to the woman nothing. But I still love oranges better and care for them more than grown people usually do, and above all things I like the smell; the rather, perhaps, that it puts me in mind of the days when, at school in London, I used to go to the play so often, and always found the house scented with the quantity of orange-peel in the pit, so that to this

hour that particular fragrance brings John Kemble to my recollection. I certainly like it the better on that account, and as certainly, although few persons can be less like the great tragedian—glorious John!—as certainly I like it none the worse for recalling to my mind, my friend Mrs. Hollis.*

As long as I can recollect, Mrs. Hollis has been the inhabitant of this grand *depôt* of choice fruits, the inmate not so much of the house as of the shop. I never saw her out of that well-glazed apartment, or heard of any one that did, nor did I ever see the shop without her. She was as much a fixture there as one of her flowerless plants, and seemed as little subject to change or decay in her own person. From seven o'clock, when it was opened, till nine, when the shutters were closed, there she sat in one place, from whence she seldom stirred, a chair behind the right-hand counter, where she could conveniently reach her most tempting merchandise, and hold dis-

* My friend Mr. Jerrold has added still another theatrical association by his inimitable creation of Orange Moll—a pleasant extravagance worthy of Middleton.

course with her friends and customers, (terms which in her case were nearly synonymous,) even although they advanced no nearer towards the sanctum than the step at the door. There she has presided, the very priestess of that temple of Pomona, for more years than I can well reckon,—from her youth (if ever she were young), to now, when, although far from looking so, she must, I suppose, according to the register, be accounted old. What can have preserved her in this vigorous freshness, unless it be the aroma of the oranges, nobody can tell. There she sits, a tall, stout, square, upright figure, surmounted by a pleasant comely face, eyes as black as a sloe, cheeks as round as an apple, and a complexion as ruddy as a peach, as fine a specimen of a healthy, hearty English tradeswoman, the feminine of “John Bull,” as one would desire to see on a summer day.

One circumstance which has probably contributed not a little to that want of change in her appearance, which makes people who have been away from Belford for twenty years or more declare that everything was altered ex-

cept Mrs. Hollis, but that she and her shop were as if they had left it only yesterday, is undoubtedly her singular adherence to one style of dress—a style which in her youth must have had the effect of making her look old, but which now, at a more advanced period of life, suits her exactly. Her costume is very neat, and as it never can have been at any time fashionable, has the great advantage of never looking old-fashioned. Fancy a dark gown, the sleeves reaching just below the elbow, cotton in summer, stuff or merino in winter, with dark mittens to meet the sleeves; a white double muslin handkerchief outside of the gown, and a handsome shawl over that, pinned so as not to meet in front; a white apron, a muslin cap with a highish formal crown, a plaited muslin border trimmed with narrow edging, (I dare say she never wore such a gew-gaw as a bit of net in her life,) a plaited *chinnum* to match fastened to the cap at either ear, and a bit of sober-coloured satin ribbon pinned round without bow or any other accompaniment; imagine all this delicately neat and clean,

and you will have some notion of Mrs. Hollis. There is a spice of coquetry in this costume—at least there would be if adopted with malice prepense, it is so becoming. But as she is probably wholly unconscious of its peculiar allurements, she has the advantage without the sin, the charm “without the illness should attend it.”

Nobody that knew Mrs. Hollis would suspect her of coquetry, or of anything implying design or contrivance of any sort. She was a thoroughly plain and simple-minded woman, honest and open in word and deed, with an uncompromising freedom of speech, and a directness and singleness of purpose, which answer better, even as regards worldly prosperity, than the cunning or the cautious would allow themselves to believe. There was not a bolder talker in all Belford than Mrs. Hollis, who saw in the course of the day people of all ranks, from my lord in his coronet carriage, to the little boys who came for ha’porths or penn’orths of inferior fruits (judiciously preferring the liberality and civility of a great shop

to the cheatery and insolence of the inferior chapwoman, who makes money by the poor urchins and snubs them all the while): from the county member's wife to the milk-woman's daughter, everybody dealt with Mrs. Hollis, and with all of them did Mrs. Hollis chat with a mixture of good humour and good spirits, of perfect ease and perfect respectfulness, which made her one of the most popular personages in the town. As a gossip she was incomparable. She knew everybody and everything, and everything about everybody; had always the freshest intelligence and the newest news; her reports, like her plums, had the bloom on them, and she would as much have scorned to palm upon you an old piece of scandal as to send you strawberries that had been two days gathered. Moreover, considering the vast quantity of chit-chat of which she was the channel, (for it was computed that the whole gossip of Belford passed through her shop once in four-and-twenty hours, like the blood through the heart,) it was really astonishing how authentic on the whole her intelligence

was; mistakes and mis-statements of course there were, and a plentiful quantity of exaggeration; but of actual falsehood there was comparatively little, and of truth, or of what approached to truth, positively much. If one told a piece of news out of Mrs. Hollis's shop, it was almost an even wager that it was substantially correct. And of what other gossip-shop can one say so much?

Chit-chat, however, eminently as she excelled in it, was not the sort of discourse which our good fruiterer preferred. Her taste lay in higher topics. She was a keen politician, a zealous partisan, a red-hot reformer, and to declaim against taxes and tories, and poor-rates and ministers—subjects which she handled as familiarly as her pippins—was the favourite pastime of our fruiterer. Friend or foe made little difference with this free-spoken lady, except that perhaps she preferred the piquancy of a good-humoured skirmish with a political adversary to the flatness of an agreement with a political ally; and it is saying not a little for tory good-humour, that her antagonists listened

and laughed, and bought her grapes and oranges just as quietly after a diatribe of her fashion as before. I rather think that they liked her oratory better than the whigs did—it amused them.*

A contested election turns her and her shop topsy-turvy. One wonders how she lives through the excitement, and how she contrives to obtain and exhibit the state of the poll almost as it seems before the candidates themselves can know the numbers. It even puts her sober-suited attire out of countenance. Green and orange being the colours of her party, she puts on two cockades of that livery, which suit as ill with her costume as they

* As an illustration both of her passion for politics, and of the way in which one is oneself possessed by the subject that happens to be the point of interest at the moment, I cannot help relating an equivoque which occurred between Mrs. Hollis and myself. I had been to London on theatrical business, and called at the shop a day or two after my return, and our little marketing being transacted, and civil inquiries as to the health of the family made and answered, I was going away, when Mrs. Hollis stopped me by asking “how they were getting on at the two great houses in London?” “Badly enough, I am afraid, Mrs. Hollis,”

would with that of a Quaker ; she hoists a gay flag at her door, and sticks her shop all over with oranges and laurel-leaves, so that it vies in decoration with the member's chair ; and in return for this devotion, the band at an election time make a halt of unusual duration before her door, (to the great inconvenience of the innumerable stage-coaches and other vehicles which pass that well-frequented corner, which by the way is the high road to London,) and the mob, especially that part of it which consists of little boys and girls, with an eye to a dole of nuts or cherries, bestow upon her almost as many cheers as they would inflict upon the candidate himself.

At these times Mr. Hollis (for there was such said I. "No doubt, ma'am," responded the lady of the orange-shop ; "but what can be expected from such management?" Just then fresh customers entered, and I walked off wondering what Mrs. Hollis could have heard of Drury-Lane and Covent-Garden, and their respective mismanagements, and how she came to know that I had been tossing in those troubled waters, when all on a sudden it occurred to me that, strange as it seemed for people to talk to me of politics, she must have meant the Houses of Lords and Commons. And so she did.

a personage, short and thick and very civil) used to make his appearance in the shop, and to show his adhesion to the cause by giving a plumper to its champion ; on other occasions he was seldom visible, having an extensive market-garden to manage in the suburbs of the town, and being for the most part engaged in trotting to and fro between Mount Pleasant and the Church-yard corner, the faithful reporter of his wife's messages and orders. As you might be certain at any given hour to find Mrs. Hollis at her post behind the counter—for little as she looked like a person who lived without eating, she never seemed to retire for the ordinary purposes of breakfast or dinner, and even managed to talk scandal without its usual accompaniment of tea—so sure were you to see her quiet steady husband (one of the best-natured and honestest men in the place) on the full trot from the garden to the shop, or the shop to the garden, with a huge fruit-basket on one arm, and his little grand-daughter Patty on the other.

Patty Hollis was the only daughter of our

good fruiterers' only son; and her parents having died in her infancy, she had been reared with the tenderness which is usually bestowed on the only remaining scion of a virtuous and happy family in that rank of life. Her grandfather especially idolized her; made her the constant companion of his many walks to the garden on the side of Mount Pleasant, and installed her, before she was twelve years of age, leader of the fruit-pickers, and superintendent of the gardeners: offices in which she so conducted herself as to give equal satisfaction to the governors and the governed, the prince and the people. Never was vice-queen more popular, or more fortunate, both in her subjects and her territory.

It would have been difficult to find a prettier bit of ground than this market-garden, with its steep slopes and romantic hollows, its groves of fruit-trees, its thickets of berry-bushes, and its carpets of strawberries. Quite shut out from the town by the sudden and precipitous rise of the hill, it opened to a charming view of the Kennet, winding through green meadows,

and formed in itself, with its troop of active labourers, men, women and girls, a scene of great animation; and during the time of the pearly pear-blossom, the snowy cherry and the rosy apple-blossom, and again in the fruit season (for next to flowers fruit is the prettiest of all things), a scene of great beauty. There was one barberry-bush, standing by itself on the top of a knoll of strawberries, which was really a picture.

But by far the most beautiful part of that pleasant scene, was the young fruit-gatherer, Patty Hollis. Her complexion, a deep rich brown, with lips like the fruit of her favourite barberry-tree, and cheeks coloured like damask roses, suited her occupation. It had a sweet sunniness that might have beseemed a vintager, and harmonized excellently with the rich tints of the cherries and currants with which her baskets were so often over-brimmed. She had, too, the clear black eye, with its long lashes, and the dark and glossy hair, which give such brightness to a brown beauty. But the real charm of her countenance was its expression.

The smiles, the dimples—the look of sweetness, of innocence, of perfect content, which had been delightful to look upon as a child, were still more delightful, because so much more rare, as she advanced towards womanhood. They seemed, and they were, the result of a character equally charming, frank, gentle, affectionate, and gay.

When about seventeen, this youthful happiness, almost too bright to last, was overclouded by a great misfortune—the death of her kind grandfather. Poor Patty's grateful heart was almost broken. She had lost one who had loved her better than he had loved anything in the world, or all the world put together; and she felt (as everybody does feel on such an occasion, though with far less cause than most of us) that her own duty and affection had never been half what his fondness for her deserved,—that she had lost her truest and most partial friend, and that she should never be happy again. So deep was her affliction, that Mrs. Hollis, herself much grieved, was obliged to throw aside her own sorrow to comfort her

It was no comfort, but seemed rather an accession of pain, to find that she was what, considering her station, might be called an heiress, —that she would be entitled to some hundreds on her marriage or her coming of age, and that the bulk of the property (accumulated by honest industry and a watchful but not mean frugality) was secured to her after the death of her grandmother.

The trustees to the property and executors of the will, who were also joined with Mrs. Hollis in the guardianship of her granddaughter were our old friend Stephen Lane, his near neighbour and political ally, and another intimate acquaintance, who, although no politician, was a person of great and deserved influence with all those of his own rank who had come in contact with his acuteness and probity.

Andrew Graham* was a Scotch gardener,

* Of a Northern clan I fancy—not one of those Grahams of the “land debateable,” to whom I have the honour of being distantly related, and of whom the Great Minstrel tells, that they stole with a laudable impartiality from both sides of the border. Speaking of the old harper, Albert Græme, Sir Walter says,

and one of the very best specimens of a class which unites, in a remarkable degree, honesty, sobriety, shrewdness, and information. Andrew had superadded to his Northern education, and an apprenticeship to a Duke's gardener, the experience of eight years passed as foreman in one of the great nurseries near London; so that his idiom, if not his accent,* was almost entirely

“ Well friended too, his hardy kin,
 Whoever lost, were sure to win;
 They sought the beeves that made their broth
 In Scotland and in England both.”

Lay of the Last Minstrel.

* The accent is not so easily got quit of. A true-born Scot rarely loses that mark of his country, let him live ever so long on this side of the Tweed; and even a Southern sometimes finds it sooner learnt than unlearnt. A gardener of my acquaintance, the head man in a neighbouring nursery-ground, who spoke as good Scotch as heart could desire, and was universally known amongst the frequenters of the garden by the title of the ‘Scotchman,’ happened not only to have been born in Hertfordshire, but never to have travelled farther north than that county. He had worked under a gardener from Aberdeen, and had picked up the dialect. Some people do catch peculiarities of tone. I myself once returned from a visit to Northumberland, speaking the Doric of Tynedale like a native, and, from love of ‘the North countrie’ was really sorry when I lost the pretty imperfection.

Anglicised ; and when he came to Belford to superintend the garden and hothouses of a very kind and very intelligent gentleman, who preferred spending the superfluities of a large income on horticultural pursuits, rather than in showier and less elegant ways, he brought into the town as long a head and as sound a heart as could be found in the county. To Mr. Hollis (who had himself begun life as a gentleman's gardener, and who thoroughly loved his art) his society was exceedingly welcome ; and he judged, and judged rightly, that to no one could he more safely confide the important trust of advising and protecting two comparatively helpless females, than to the two friends whom he had chosen.

Andrew vindicated his good opinion by advising Mrs. Hollis to resign the garden, (which was held on lease of our other good friend, Mr. Howard,) dispose of the shop (which was her own), take a small house in the suburbs, and live on her property ; and he urged this the rather as he suspected her foreman of paying frequent visits to a certain beer-house, lately

established in the neighbourhood of Mount Pleasant, and bearing the insidious sign of 'The Jolly Gardener ;' and because, as he observed, " when an Englishman turned of fifty once takes to the national vice of tippling, you may as well look to raise pine-apples from cabbage-stocks, as expect him to amend. He'll go to the Jolly Gardener and the rest of the lads will follow him, and the garden may take care of itself. Part with the whole concern, my good lady, and ye are safe — keep it, and ye 'll be cheated."

Now this was good advice ; and it had the usual fate of good advice, in being instantly and somewhat scornfully rejected. Mrs. Hollis had a high opinion of her foreman, and could not and would not live out of her shop ; and as even Patty pleaded for the garden, though she intimated some suspicion of its manager, the whole concern remained *in statu quo* ; and Andrew, when he saw the smiles return to her lips, and the bloom to her cheeks, and found how much her health and happiness depended on her spending her days in the open air, and

in the employment she loved, ceased to regret that his counsel had not been followed, more especially as the head man, having more than verified his prediction, had been discharged, and replaced, according to his recommendation, by a young and clever labourer in the garden.

Sooner than Patty had thought it possible her cheerfulness came back to her; she half lived at Mount Pleasant, did all she could to assist the new head man, who, although merely a self-taught lad of the neighbourhood, did honour to Andrew's discrimination, and was beginning to discover (the god of love only knows how) that to be, in a small way, an heiress was no insupportable misfortune, when a vexation arising from that very cause almost made her wish herself really the "wild wandering gipsy" which her poor grandfather had delighted to call her.

The calamity in question was no trifle. Poor Patty was unfortunate enough to be courted by Mr. Samuel Vicars, hair-dresser and perfumer, in Bristol-street; and to add to the trial the suitor was the especial

favourite of her grandmother, and his addresses were supported by all her influence and authority.

Mr. Samuel Vicars was one of those busy-bodies who are the pests of a country town. To be a gossip is perhaps permitted to the craft, as inheritors of those old privileged disseminators of news and scandal, the almost extinct race of barbers; but to be so tittle-tattling, so mischief-making, and so malicious as Mr. Samuel Vicars, is not allowed to anybody; and the universal ill-will which such a style of conversation indicates is pretty certain to be returned in kind. Accordingly, the young gentleman had contrived to gather around himself as comfortable a mixture of contempt and hatred as one would desire to see on a summer's day.

It was a little, pert, dapper personage, as slight and flimsy as his white apron or his linen jacket, with a face in which all that was not curl and whisker was simper and smirk, a sharp conceited voice, and a fluency, which as it might be accounted a main cause of the thou-

sand and one scrapes into which he was perpetually getting, was almost as unlucky for himself as for his hearers. He buzzed about one like a gnat, all noise and sting and motion, and one wondered, as one does in the case of that impertinent insect, how anything so insignificant could be so troublesome.

Besides the innumerable private quarrels into which his genius for "evil-speaking, lying, and slandering," could not fail to bring him,—quarrels the less easily settled, because having a genuine love of litigation, an actual passion for the importance and excitement of a lawsuit, he courted an action for damages, in which he could figure as defendant on the one hand, and blessed his stars for a horsewhipping, in which he shone as plaintiff, on the other; besides these private disputes, he engaged with the most fiery zeal and the fiercest activity in all the public squabbles of the place, and being unhappily, as Stephen Lane used to observe, of *his* party, and a partisan whom it was morally impossible to keep quiet, contrived to be a greater thorn in the side of our worthy friend than all

his opponents put together. Woe to the cause which he advocated ! The plainest case came out one mass of confusion from the curious infelicity of his statements, and right seemed wrong when seen through the misty medium of his astounding and confounding verbiage. Stephen's contempt for his adherent's orations was pretty much such as a staunch old hound might evince when some young dog, the babler of the pack, begins to give tongue:—"But, dang it," cried the good butcher, "he brings the cause into contempt too ! It's enough to make a man sell himself for a slave," added the poor patriot, in a paroxysm of weariness and indignation, "to hear that chap jabber for three hours about freedom. And the whole world can't stop him. If he would but rat now !" exclaimed the ex-butcher. And doubtless Samuel would have ratted, if anybody would have made it worth his while ; but the other party knew the value of such an opponent, and wisely left him in the ranks of opposition, to serve their cause by speaking against it ; so Mr. Samuel Vicars continued a Reformer.

It was this circumstance that first recommended him to the notice of Mrs. Hollis, who, herself a perfectly honest and true-hearted woman, took for granted that Samuel was as veracious and single-minded as herself, believed all his puffs of his own speeches, and got nearer to thinking him, what he thought himself, a very clever fellow, than any other person whom he had ever honoured by his acquaintance. Besides the political sympathy, they had one grand tie in a common antipathy. A certain Mrs. Deborah Dean, long a green-grocer in the Butts, and even then taking higher ground than Mrs. Hollis thought at all proper, had recently entered into partnership with a nursery-man, and had opened a magnificent store for seeds, plants, fruit, and vegetables, in Queen-street; and although the increasing size of Belford and the crowded population of the neighbourhood were such as really demanded another shop, and that at the corner of the church-yard continued to have even more customers than its mistress could well manage, yet she had reigned too long over all the fruitage of the town

to “bear a *sister* near the throne;” and she hated Mrs. Deborah (who besides was a “blue”) with a hatred truly feminine—hot, angry, and abusive; and the offending party being, as it happened, a mild, civil, unoffending woman, poor Mrs. Hollis had had the misfortune to find nobody ready to join in speaking ill of her until she encountered Samuel Vicars, who poured the whole force of his vituperative eloquence on the unfortunate dame. Now Samuel, who had had some pecuniary dealings with her whilst she lived in his neighbourhood—certain barterings of cabbages, celery, carrots and French beans, against combs and tooth-brushes, and a Parisian front, which had led first to a disputed account, and then to the catastrophe in which he most delighted, a lawsuit,—was charmed on his side to meet with what seldom came in his way, a sympathising listener. He called every day to descant on the dear subject, and feed Mrs. Hollis’s hatred with fresh accounts of her rival’s insolence and prosperity; and in the course of his daily visits it occurred to him that she was well to do in the world, and that he

could not do a better thing than to cast the eyes of affection on her pretty granddaughter.

Samuel's own affairs were exceedingly in want of a rich wife. What with running after *la chose publique*, and neglecting his own affairs,—what with the friends that he lost and the enemies that he gained by the use of that mischievous weapon, his tongue—to say nothing of the many lawsuits in which he was cast, and those scarcely less expensive that he won—his concerns were in as much disorder as if he had been a lord. A hairdresser's is at the best a meagre business, especially in a country town, and his had declined so much, that his one apprentice, an idle lad of fourteen, and the three or four painted figures, on which his female wigs were stuck in the windows, had the large showy shop, with its stock of glittering trumpery, pretty much to themselves; so that Samuel began to pay most assiduous court, not to his fair intended,—for, pretty girl as Patty was, our Narcissus of the curling irons was far too much enamoured of himself to dream of falling in love with a pair of cherry cheeks,—but to her

grandmother ; and having picked up at the Jolly Gardener certain rumours of Mount Pleasant, which he related to his patroness with much of bitterness and exaggeration, awakened such a tempest of wrath in her bosom that she wrote a letter to Mr. Howard, giving him notice that in six months she should relinquish the garden, discharged her new foreman on the spot, and ordered Patty to prepare to marry the hairdresser without let or delay.

Poor Patty ! her only consolation was in her guardians. Her first thought was of Andrew, but *he* was sure to have the evil tidings from another quarter ; besides, of him there could be no doubt ; her only fear was of Stephen Lane. So, as soon as she could escape from the Padrona's scolding, and wipe the tears from her own bright eyes, she set forth for the great shop in the Butts.

“ Well, my rosebud ! ” said the good butcher, kindly chucking his fair ward under the chin ; “ what's the news with you ? Why, you are as great a stranger as strawberries at Christmas ! I thought you had taken root at

Mount Pleasant, and never meant to set foot in the town again."

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" — began poor Patty, and then her courage failed her, and she stopped suddenly and looked down abashed;—"Oh! Mr. Lane!"——

"Well, what's the matter?" inquired her kind guardian; "are you going to be married, and come to ask my consent?"

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" again sighed Patty.

"Out with it, lass! — never fear!" quoth Stephen.

"Oh, Mr. Lane!" once more cried the damsel, stopping as if spellbound, and blushing to her fingers' ends.

"Well, Patty, if you can't speak to a friend that has dandled you in his arms, and your father before you, you'd best send the lad to see what he can say for himself. I shan't be cruel, I promise you. Though you might do better in the way of money, I would rather look to character. That's what tells in the long-run, and I like the chap."

"Oh, Mr. Lane, God forbid!" exclaimed

Patty ; “ my grandmother wants me to marry Samuel Vicars ! ”

“ Sam Vicars ! the woman’s mad ! ” ejaculated Stephen.

“ She cannot be other than demented,” observed Andrew, who had just entered the shop, “ for she has discharged William Reid,—the steadiest and cleverest lad that ever came about a garden, a lad who might be taken for a Scotchman,—and wants to marry Miss Patty to a loon of a hairdresser.”

“ Whom anybody would take for a Frenchman,” interrupted the butcher ; and having thus summed up the characters of the two rivals in a manner that did honour no less to their warm feelings than to their strong prejudices, the two guardians and their fair ward, much comforted by the turn the conversation had taken, began to consult as to their future proceedings.

“ She must give up the garden, since she has given notice,” quoth Andrew ; “ but that won’t much signify. This is only the beginning of January, but Christmas being passed, the

notice will date only from Lady-day, so that she'll keep it till Michaelmas, and will have plenty of opportunity to miss William Reid's care and skill, and honesty —"

"But poor William, what will become of him?" interposed his fair mistress: "William to be turned away at a day's warning, like a drunkard or a thief! What will he do?"

"Just as a very industrious and very clever gardener always does. He'll prosper, depend upon it. And besides, my dear, to tell ye a bit of a secret, your good friend Mr. Howard, who likes William so well, has given him an acre and a half of his cottage allotments, in capital order, and partly stocked, which happened to fall vacant just as it was wanted. And you must wait quietly, my bonny lass, and see what time will do for ye. William's three-and-twenty, and ye are nineteen,—ye have a long life before ye—wait and see what'll turn up. Mr. Howard is one of the best men in the world, although he has the ill luck to be a tory," pursued Andrew, with a sly glance at Stephen.

“Never a better, although he had the ill-luck to be born on the south of the Tweed,” responded Stephen, returning the glance.

“Mr. Howard is your staunch friend,” pursued Andrew; “and as for your grandmother, she’s a good woman too, and will soon be sick of that jackanapes, if she be only left to find him out herself. So go home, my bonny doo, and be comforted,” said the kind-hearted Scotchman, patting the round cheek to which the colour and the dimples were returning under the reviving influence of hope.

“Ay, get along home, rosebud,” added the equally kind Englishman, chucking her under the chin, and giving her a fatherly kiss, “get along home, for fear they should miss you. And as to being married to that whipper-snapper with his curls and his whiskers, why, if I saw the slightest chance of such a thing, I’d take him up between my finger and thumb, and pitch him up to the top of St. Stephen’s tower before you could say Jack Robinson! Get along, rosebud! I’ll not see thee made unhappy, I promise thee.”

And much consoled by these kind promises, poor Patty stole back to the little shop at the corner of the church-yard.

The winter, the spring, and the summer, crept slowly by, bringing with them a gradual amelioration of prospect to our nutbrown maid. Time, as Andrew had predicted, had done much to sicken Mrs. Hollis of the proposed alliance. Her honest and simple nature, and her real goodness of heart, soon revolted at his bitterness and malice, and enduring enmities. Her animosities, which vanished almost as she gave them utterance, had no sympathy with such eternity of hatred. Even her rival and competitor, Mrs. Dean, had been forgiven, as soon as she discovered that the world (even the little world of Belford) had room enough for both, and that by adding the superior sorts of vegetables to her stock, with the very finest of which she was supplied through the medium of Andrew Graham, she had even increased the number of her customers and the value of her business, which, in spite of her having given notice of quitting the garden (a measure which

Patty suspected her of regretting), she had determined to continue. She was weary, too, of his frivolity, his idleness and his lies, and having taken upon her to lecture him on his several sins of gadding, tattling, meddle-making and so forth, even intimating some distrust of his oratorical powers and his political importance, Mr. Samuel began to be nearly as tired of his patroness as his patroness was of him ; so that, although no formal breach had taken place, Patty felt herself nearly rid of that annoyance.

In the mean while, a new attraction, particularly interesting to the gardening world, had arisen in Belford, in the shape of a Horticultural Society. Nothing could be more beautiful than the monthly shows of prize flowers, fruits, and vegetables, in the splendid Town-hall. All the county attended them, and our country belles never showed to so much advantage as side by side by their rivals the flowers, giving themselves up with their whole hearts to a delighted admiration of the loveliest productions of Nature. Andrew Graham was

of course one of the most successful competitors, and Mr. Howard one of the most zealous and intelligent patrons of the society, whilst even our friend Stephen took some concern in the matter, declaring that good cabbage was no bad accompaniment to good beef, and that all the wearers of blue aprons, whether butcher or gardener, had a claim to his affection—a classification at which Andrew, who had a high veneration for the dignity of his art, was not a little scandalized. Patty from the first had been an enthusiastic admirer of the whole plan, and Mrs. Hollis had been bribed into liking it, (for old people do not spontaneously take to novelties, especially in their own pursuits,) by the assurance of Andrew that the choice fruit and vegetables, the rare Carolina beans and green Indian corn—the peas and strawberries so very early and so very late, so large of size and delicate of flavour—the lettuces and cauliflowers unmatched in whiteness and firmness, and a certain new melon which combined all the merits of all the melons hitherto known, came exclusively from one of the prize exhibitors

of the horticultural meeting, and should be reserved exclusively for her, if she desired to purchase them. Farther Mrs. Hollis was too discreet to inquire. There are secrets in all trades, and none are more delicate than those regarding the supply of a great fruit-shop. She knew that they did not come from Andrew, for his character set suspicion at defiance; but all his friends might not be equally scrupulous. Silence was safest.

So much had Patty been delighted with the prize-shows, all of which she had attended, as was permitted to respectable tradespeople in the afternoon when the gentry had returned home to dinner, that she had actually excited in Mrs. Hollis a desire to go with her, and at every meeting the expedition had been threatened, but had gone off, on the score of weather, or of illness, or of business — or, in short, any one of the many excuses which people who seldom go out make to themselves to avoid the exertion, so that the last day arrived and “Yarrow” was still “unvisited.” But that it was the last was a powerful plea with Patty, whose

importunity, seconded by a bright sunshiny September evening, and by the gallantry of Mr. Lane, who arrived dressed in his best blue coat and red waistcoat on purpose to escort her, proved irresistible; and Mrs. Hollis, leaving the shop in charge of a trusty maid-servant, an alert shopboy, and a sedate and civil neighbour, (a sort of triple guardianship which she considered necessary to supply her own single presence,) gave to the inhabitants of Belford the great and unprecedented novelty of seeing her in the streets on a week-day. The people of Thibet would hardly be more astonished at the sight of the Dalai Lama.

On reaching the Town-hall, she was struck even as much as she intended to be with the fragrance and beauty of the hothouse plants, the pines, grapes, peaches, and jars of flowers from the gardens of the gentlemen's seats in the neighbourhood, shown as they were with all the advantages of tasteful arrangement and the magical effect of the evening light. "What a many flowers have been *invented* since I was young!" was her natural thought, clothed in

the very words in which it passed through her mind.

She turned, however, from the long rows in which the contributions of the members had been piled, to some smaller tables at the top of the room, filled with the productions of cottage exhibitors. One of these standing a little apart was understood to be appropriated to an individual of this description, a half-taught labourer tilling his own spot of ground, who had never in his life worked in anything beyond a common market-garden, but who had won almost every prize for which he had contended—had snatched the prizes not only from competitors of his own class, but from the gardeners of the nobility and gentry—had, in short, beaten everybody, even Andrew Graham. To this table Mrs. Hollis turned with peculiar interest—an interest not diminished when she beheld there piled with a picturesqueness that looked as if copied from Van Huysum; the identical green Indian corn, Carolina beans, the lettuces and cauliflowers, the late peas and autumnal strawberries, and the newest and best of all

MRS. HOLLIS,

possible melons, with which she had been so mysteriously supplied, flanked by two jars of incomparable dahlias, and backed by a large white rose, delicate and regular as the *rose de Meaux*, and two seedling geraniums of admirable beauty, labelled 'The Mount Pleasant' and 'The Patty.' By the side of the table stood Andrew Graham, Mr. Howard, and William Reid.

"The lad has beaten me, Mrs. Hollis, but I forgive him," quoth our friend Andrew, smiling; "I told ye that his wares were the best in the market."

"And you must forgive me, Mrs. Hollis, for having made him your successor in the Mount Pleasant garden," said Mr. Howard. "I have been building a pretty cottage there for him and his wife, when he is fortunate enough to get one; and now that I see you do get out sometimes, if you would but come and see it—"

"And if you would but let me give away the bride" — added honest Stephen, seizing Patty's hand, while the tears ran down her cheeks like rain.

“And if you would but let me manage the garden for you, Mrs. Hollis, and be as a son to you”—said William, pleadingly.

And vanquished at once by natural feeling and professional taste—for the peas, melons, and strawberries, had taken possession of her very heart,—Mrs. Hollis yielded. In less than a month the young couple were married, and the very next day Mr. Samuel Vicars ran away from his creditors, whom till then he had pacified by the expectation of his making a wealthy match, and was never heard of in Belford again.

BELLES OF THE BALL-ROOM.

THE WILL.

I NOW proceed to record some of the more aristocratic belles of the Belford assemblies, the young ladies of the neighbourhood, who, if not prettier than their compeers of the town, were at least more fashionable and more admired.

Nothing in the whole routine of country life seems to me more capricious and unaccountable than the choice of a county beauty. Every shire in the kingdom, from Brobdignaggian York to Lilliputian Rutland, can boast of one. The existence of such a personage seems as essential to the well-being of a provincial community as that of the queen-bee in a hive ; and

except by some rare accident, when two fair sisters, for instance, of nearly equal pretensions appear in similar dresses at the same balls and the same archery meetings, you as seldom see two queens of Brentford in the one society as the other. Both are elective monarchies, and both tolerably despotic ; but so far I must say for the little winged people, that one comprehends the impulse which guides them in the choice of a sovereign far better than the motives which influence their brother-insects, the beaux : and the reason of this superior sagacity in the lesser swarms is obvious. With them the election rests in a natural instinct, an unerring sense of fitness, which never fails to discover with admirable discrimination the one only she who suits their purpose ; whilst the other set of voluntary subjects, the plumeless bipeds, are unluckily abandoned to their own wild will, and, although from long habits of imitation almost as unanimous as the bees, seem guided in their admiration by the merest caprice, the veriest chance, and select their

goddess, the goddess of beauty, blindfold—as the Bluecoat boys draw, or used to draw, the tickets in a lottery.

Nothing is so difficult to define as the customary qualification of the belle of a country assembly. Face or figure it certainly is not; for take a stranger into the room, and it is at least two to one but he will fix on twenty damsels prettier than the county queen; nor, to do the young gentlemen justice, is it fortune or connexion; for, so as the lady come within the prescribed limits of county gentility, (which, by the way, are sufficiently arbitrary and exclusive,) nothing more is required in a beauty—whatever might be expected in a wife; fortune it is not, still less is it rank, and least of all accomplishments. In short, it seems to me equally difficult to define what is the requisite and what is not; for, on looking back through twenty years to the successive belles of the Belford balls, I cannot fix on any one definite qualification. One damsel seemed to me chosen for gaiety and good humour, a merry, laughing girl; another

for haughtiness and airs; one because her father was hospitable, another because her mother was pleasant; one became fashionable because related to a fashionable poet, whilst another stood on her own independent merits as one of the boldest riders in the hunt, and earned her popularity at night by her exploits in the morning.

Among the whole list, the one who commanded the most universal admiration, and seemed to me to approach nearest to the common notion of a pretty woman, was the high-born and graceful Constance Lisle. Besides being a tall elegant figure, with finely chiselled features and a pale but delicate complexion, relieved by large dark eyes full of sensibility, and a profusion of glossy black hair, her whole air and person were eminently distinguished by that undefinable look of fashion and high breeding, that indisputable stamp of superiority, which, for want of a better word, we are content to call style. Her manners were in admirable keeping with her appearance. Gentle, gracious, and self-possessed; courteous to all and

courting none, she received the flattery to which she had been accustomed from her cradle as mere words of course, and stimulated the ardour of her admirers by her calm non-notice infinitely more than a finished coquette would have done by all the *agaceries* of the most consummate vanity.

Nothing is commoner than the affectation of indifference. But the indifference of Miss Lisle was so obviously genuine, that the most superficial coxcomb that buzzed around her could hardly suspect its reality. She heeded admiration no more than that queen of the garden, the lady lily, whom she so much resembled in modest dignity. It played around her as the sunny air of June around the snow-white flower, her common and natural atmosphere.

This was perhaps one reason for the number of beaux who fluttered round Constance. It puzzled and piqued them. They were unused to be of so little consequence to a young lady, and could not make it out. Another cause might perhaps be found in the splendid fortune

which she inherited from her mother, and which, independently of her expectations from her father, rendered her the greatest match and richest heiress in the county.

Richard Lisle, her father, a second son of the ancient family of Lisle of Lisle-End, had been one of those men born, as it seems, to fortune, with whom every undertaking prospers through a busy life. Of an ardent and enterprising temper, at once impetuous and obstinate, he had mortally offended his father and elder brother by refusing to take orders and to accept in due season the family livings, which time out of mind had been the provision of the second sons of their illustrious house. Rejected by his relations, he had gone out as an adventurer to India, had been taken into favour by the head-partner of a great commercial house, married his daughter, entered the civil service of the Company, been resident at the court of one native prince and governor of the forfeited territory of another, had accumulated wealth through all the various means by which in India money has been found to

make money, and finally returned to England a widower, with an only daughter, and one of the largest fortunes ever brought from the gorgeous East.

Very different had been the destiny of the family at home. Old Sir Rowland Lisle, (for the name was to be found in one of the earliest pages of the Baronetage,) an expensive, ostentatious man, proud of his old ancestry, of his old place, and of his old English hospitality, was exactly the person to involve any estate, however large its amount; and, when two contests for the county had brought in their train debt and mortgages, and he had recourse to horse-racing and hazard to deaden the sense of his previous imprudence, nobody was astonished to find him dying of grief and shame, a heart-broken and almost ruined man.

His eldest son, Sir Everard, was perfectly free from either of these destructive vices; but he, besides an abundant portion of irritability, obstinacy, and family pride, had one quality quite as fatal to the chance of redeeming his embarrassed fortunes as the election-

earing and gambling propensities of his father;—to wit, a love of litigation so strong and predominant that it assumed the form of a passion.

He plunged at once into incessant law-suits with creditor and neighbour, and, in despite of the successive remonstrances of his wife, a high-born and gentle-spirited woman, who died a few years after their marriage,—of his daughter, a strong-minded girl, who, moderately provided for by a female relation, married at eighteen a respectable clergyman,—and of his son, a young man of remarkable promise still at college,—he had contrived, by the time his brother returned from India, not only to mortgage nearly the whole of his estate, but to get into dispute or litigation with almost every gentleman for ten miles round.

The arrival of the governor afforded some ground of hope to the few remaining friends of the family. He was known to be a man of sense and probity, and by no means deficient in pride after his own fashion; and no one doubted but a reconciliation would take place,

and a part of the nabob's rupees be applied to the restoration of the fallen glories of Lisle-End. With that object in view, a distant relation contrived to produce a seemingly accidental interview at his own house between the two brothers, who had had no sort of intercourse, except an interchange of cold letters on their father's death, since the hour of their separation.

Never was mediation more completely unsuccessful. They met as cold and reluctant friends; they parted as confirmed and bitter enemies. Both, of course, were to blame; and equally of course, each laid the blame on the other. Perhaps the governor's intentions might be the kindest. Undoubtedly his manner was the worst: for, scolding, haranguing, and laying down the law, as he had been accustomed to do in India, he at once offered to send his nephew abroad with the certainty of accumulating an ample fortune, and to relieve his brother's estate from mortgage, and allow him a handsome income on the small condition of taking possession himself of the family mansion

and the family property—a proposal coldly and stiffly refused by the elder brother, who, without deigning to notice the second proposition, declined his son's entering into the service of a commercial company, much in the spirit and almost in the words of Rob Roy, when the good Baillie Nicol Jarvie proposed to apprentice his hopeful offspring to the mechanical occupation of a weaver. The real misfortune of the interview was, that the parties were too much alike, both proud, both irritable, both obstinate, and both too much accustomed to deal chiefly with their inferiors.

The negotiation failed completely; but the governor, clinging to his native place with a mixed feeling, compounded of love for the spot and hatred to its proprietor, purchased at an exorbitant price an estate close at hand, built a villa, and laid out grounds with the usual magnificence of an Indian, bought every acre of land that came under sale for miles around, was shrewdly suspected of having secured some of Sir Everard's numerous mortgages, and, in short, proceeded to invest Lisle-End just as

formally as the besieging army sat down before the citadel of Antwerp. He spared no pains to annoy his enemy ; defended all the actions brought by his brother, the lord of many manors, against trespassers' and poachers ; disputed his motions at the vestry ; quarrelled with his decisions on the bench ; turned whig because Sir Everard was a tory ; and set the whole parish and half the county by the ears by his incessant squabbles.

Amongst the gentry, his splendid hospitality, his charming daughter, and the exceeding unpopularity of his adversary, who at one time or other had been at law with nearly all of them, commanded many partisans. But the common people, frequently great sticklers for hereditary right, adhered for the most part to the cause of their landlord—ay, even those with whom he had been disputing all his life long. This might be partly ascribed to their universal love for the young squire Henry, whose influence among the poor fairly balanced that of Constance among the rich ; but the chief cause was certainly to be found in the character of the governor himself.

At first it seemed a fine thing to have obtained so powerful a champion in every little scrape. They found, however, and pretty quickly, that in gaining this new and magnificent protector they had also gained a master. Obedience was a necessary of life to our Indian, who, although he talked about liberty and equality, and so forth, and looked on them abstractedly as excellent things, had no very exact practical idea of their operation, and claimed in England the same "awful rule and just supremaey" which he had exercised in the East. Everything must bend to his sovereign will and pleasure, from the laws of cricket to the laws of the land; so that the sturdy farmers were beginning to grumble, and his *protégés*, the poachers, to rebel, when the sudden death of Sir Everard put an immediate stop to his operations and his enmity.

For the new Sir Henry, a young man beloved by everybody, studious and thoughtful, but most amiably gentle and kind, his uncle had always entertained an involuntary respect—a respect due at once to his admirable conduct

and his high-toned and interesting character. They knew each other by sight, but had never met until a few days after the funeral, when the governor repaired to Lisle-End in deep mourning, shook his nephew heartily by the hand, condoled with him on his loss, begged to know in what way he could be of service to him, and finally renewed the offer to send him out to India, with the same advantages that would have attended his own son, which he had previously made to Sir Everard. The young heir thanked him with that smile, rather tender than glad, which gave its sweet expression to his countenance, sighed deeply, and put into his hands a letter 'which he had found,' he said, 'amongst his poor father's papers, and which must be taken for his answer to his uncle's generous and too tempting offers.'

"You refuse me then?" asked the governor.

"Read that letter, and tell me if I can do otherwise. Only read that letter," resumed Sir Henry; and his uncle, curbing with some difficulty his natural impatience, opened and read the paper.

It was a letter from a dying father to a beloved son, conjuring him by the duty he had ever shown to obey his last injunction, and neither to sell, let, alienate, nor leave Lisle-End; to preserve the estate entire and undiminished so long as the rent sufficed to pay the interest of the mortgages; and to live among his old tenantry in his own old halls so long as the ancient structure would yield him shelter. "Do this, my beloved son," pursued the letter, "and take your father's tenderest blessing; and believe that a higher blessing will follow on the sacrifice of interest, ambition, and worldly enterprise, to the will of a dying parent. You have obeyed my injunctions living—do not scorn them dead. Again and again I bless you, prime solace of a life of struggle—my dear, my dutiful son!"

"Could I disobey?" inquired Sir Henry, as his uncle returned him the letter; "could it even be a question?"

"No!" replied the governor peevishly. "But to mew you up with the deer and the pheasants in this wild old park, to immure a

fine, spirited lad in this huge old mansion along with family pictures and suits of armour, and all for a whim, a crotchet, which can answer no purpose upon earth—it's enough to drive a man mad!"

"It will not be for long," returned Sir Henry, gently. "Short as it is, my race is almost run. And then, thanks to the unbroken entail—the entail which I never could prevail to have broken, when it might have spared *him* so much misery—the park, mansion, and estate, even the old armour and the family pictures, will pass into much better hands—into yours. And Lisle-End will once more flourish in splendour and in hospitality."

The young baronet smiled as he said this; but the governor, looking on his tall, slender figure and pallid cheek, felt that it was likely to be true, and, wringing his hand in silence, was about to depart, when Sir Henry begged him to remain a moment longer.

"I have still one favour to beg of you, my dear uncle—one favour which I may beg. When last I saw Miss Lisle at the house of

my sister Mrs. Beauchamp, (for I have twice accidentally had the happiness to meet her there,) she expressed a wish that you had such a piece of water in your grounds as that at the east end of the park, which luckily adjoins your demesne. She would like, she said, a pleasure-vessel on that pretty lake. Now I may not sell, or let, or alienate — but surely I may lend. And if you will accept this key, and she will deign to use as her own the Lisle-End mere, I need not, I trust, say how sacred from all intrusion from me or mine the spot would prove, or how honoured I should feel myself if it could contribute, however slightly, to her pleasure. Will you tell her this?"

"You had better come and tell her yourself."

"No! Oh no!"

"Well, then, I suppose I must."

And the governor went slowly home whistling, not for "want of thought," but as a frequent custom of his when anything vexed him.

About a month after this conversation, the father and daughter were walking through a narrow piece of woodland, which divided the

highly ornamented gardens of the governor, with their miles of gravel-walks and acres of American borders, from the magnificent park of Lisle-End. The scene was beautiful, and the weather, a sunny day in early May, showed the landscape to an advantage belonging, perhaps, to no other season : on the one hand, the gorgeous shrubs, trees, and young plantations of the new place, the larch in its tenderest green, lilacs, laburnums, and horse-chestnuts, in their flowery glory, and the villa, with its irregular and oriental architecture, rising above all ; on the other, the magnificent oaks and beeches of the park, now stretching into avenues, now clumped on its swelling lawns, (for the ground was remarkable for its inequality of surface,) now reflected in the clear water of the lake, into which the woods sometimes advanced in mimic promontories, receding again into tiny bays, by the side of which the dappled deer lay in herds beneath the old thorns ; whilst, on an eminence, at a considerable distance, the mansion, a magnificent structure of Elizabeth's day, with its gable-ends and clus-

tered chimneys, stood silent and majestic as a pyramid in the desert. The spot on which they stood had a character of extraordinary beauty, and yet different from either scene. It was a wild glen, through which an irregular footpath led to the small gate in the park, of which Sir Henry had sent Constance the key; the shelving banks on either side clothed with furze in the fullest blossom, which scented the air with its rich fragrance, and would almost have dazzled the eye with its golden lustre but for a few scattered firs and hollies, and some straggling clumps of the feathery birch. The nightingales were singing around, the wood-pigeons cooing overhead, and the father and daughter passed slowly and silently along, as if engrossed by the sweetness of the morning and the loveliness of the scene.

They were thinking of nothing less; as was proved by the first question of the governor, who, always impatient of any pause in conversation, demanded of his daughter "what answer he was to return to the offer of Lord Fitz-allan."

“A courteous refusal, my dear father, if you please,” answered Constance.

“But I do not please,” replied her father, with his crossest whistle. “Here you say No! and No! and No! to everybody, instead of marrying some one or other of these young men who flock round you, and giving me the comfort of seeing a family of grandchildren about me in my old age. No to this lord! and No to that! I verily believe, Constance, that you mean to die an old maid.”

“I do not expect to live to be an old maid,” sighed Constance; “but nothing is so unlikely as my marrying.”

“Whew!” ejaculated the governor. “So she means to die, as well as her cousin! What has put that notion into your head, Constance? Are you ill?”

“Not particularly,” replied the daughter. “But yet I am persuaded that my life will be a short one. And so, my dear father, as you told me the other day that now that I am of age I ought to make my will, I have just been following your advice.”

“ Oh ! that accounts for your thinking of dying. Everybody after first making a will expects not to survive above a week or two. I did not myself, I remember, some forty years ago, when, having scraped a few hundreds together, I thought it a duty to leave them to somebody. But I got used to the operation as I became richer and older. Well, Constance ! you have a pretty little fortune to bequeath—about three hundred thousand pounds, as I take it. What have you done with your money ?—not left it to me, I hope ? ”

“ No, dear father ; you desired me not.”

“ That ’s right. But whom have you made your heir ? Your maid, Nannette ? or your lap-dog, Fido ?—they are your prime pets— or the County Hospital ? or the Literary Fund ? or the National Gallery ? or the British Museum ?—eh, Constance ? ”

“ None of these, dear father. I have left my property where it will certainly be useful, and I think well used — to my cousin Henry of Lisle-End.”

“ Her cousin Henry of Lisle-End ! ” re-

echoed the father, smiling, and then sending forth a short loud whistle, eloquent of pleasure and astonishment. "So, so! Her cousin Henry!"

"But keep my secret, I conjure you, dear father!" pursued Constance, eagerly.

"Her cousin Henry!" said the governor to himself, sitting down on the side of the bank to calculate: "her cousin Henry! And she may be queen of Lisle-End, as this key proves, queen of the lake, and the land, and the land's master. And the three hundred thousand pounds will more than clear away the mortgages, and I can take care of her jointure and the younger children. I like your choice exceedingly, Constance," continued her father, drawing her to him on the bank.

"Oh, my dear father, I beseech you keep my secret!"

"Yes, yes, we'll keep the secret quite as long as it shall be necessary. Don't blush so, my charmer, for you have no need. Let me see—there must be a six months' mourning—but the preparations may be going on just the

same. And, in spite of my foolish brother and his foolish will, my Constance will be lady of Lisle-End."

And within six months the wedding did take place ; and, if there could be a happier person than the young bridegroom or his lovely bride, it was the despotic but kind-hearted governor.

THE GREEK PLAYS.

AFTER speaking of the excellent air and healthy situation of Belford, as well as its central position with regard to Bath, Southampton, Brighton, and Oxford, and its convenient distance from the metropolis, the fact of its abounding in boarding-schools might almost be assumed ; since in a country town with these recommendations you are as sure to find a colony of schoolmasters and schoolmistresses, as you are to meet with a rookery in a grove of oaks. It is the natural habitation of the species.

Accordingly all the principal streets in Belford, especially the different entrances to the town, were furnished with classical, commercial,

and mathematical academies for young gentlemen, or polite seminaries for young ladies. Showy and spacious-looking mansions they were for the most part, generally a little removed from the high road, and garnished with the captivating titles of Clarence House, Sussex House, York House, and Gloucester House; it being, as every one knows, the approved fashion of the loyal fraternity of schoolmasters to call their respective residences after one or other of the Princes, dead or alive, of the royal House of Brunswick. Not a hundred yards could you walk without stumbling on some such rural academe; and you could hardly proceed half a mile on any of the main roads without encountering a train of twenty or thirty pretty, prim misses, arranged in orderly couplets like steps in a ladder, beginning with the shortest, and followed by two or three demure and neatly-arrayed governesses; or some more irregular procession of straggling boys, for whom the wide footpath was all too narrow, some loitering behind, some scampering before, some straying on one side, some on the other—

dirty, merry, untidy and unruly, as if Eton,* or Westminster, or the London University itself, had the honour of their education: nay, if you chanced to pass the Lancasterian School, or the National School, towards four in the evening or twelve at noon, you might not only witness the turbulent outpouring of that most boisterous mob of small people, with a fair prospect of being yourself knocked down, or at best of upsetting some urchin in the rush (the chance of playing knocker or knockee being almost even); but might also, if curious in such matters, have an opportunity of deciding whether the Dissenters under Mr. Lancaster's system, or the Church of England children under Dr. Bell's, succeeded best in producing a given quantity of noise, and whether the din of shouting boys or the clamour of squalling girls, in the ecstatic uproariousness of their release from the school-room, be the more intolerable to ears of any delicacy.

Besides these comparatively modern estab-

* Everybody remembers the poet Gray's description of the youthful members of the aristocracy, the future peers and incipient senators, at Eton: "dirty boys playing at cricket."

lishments for education, Belford boasted two of those old picturesque foundations, a blue-coat school for boys, and a green-school for girls,—proofs of the charity and piety of our ancestors, who, on the abolition of monasteries, so frequently bestowed their posthumous bounty on endowments for the godly bringing up of poor children, and whose munificence, if less extended in the numbers taught, was so much more comprehensive and complete with regard to the selected objects; including not only bed and board, and lodging and clothing, during the period of instruction, but even apprentice fees for placing them out when they had been taught the simple and useful knowledge which their benefactors thought necessary. For my own part, I confess myself somewhat old-fashioned in these matters, and admitting the necessity of as wide a diffusion of education as possible, cannot help entertaining a strong predilection for these limited and orderly charity-schools, where good principles and good conduct, and the value of character, both in the children and their teachers, form the first considera-

tion. I certainly do not like them the less for the pleasant associations belonging to their picturesque old-fashioned dress — the long-waisted bodies and petticoat-like skirt of the bluecoat boys, their round tasselled caps, and monkish leathern girdles ; or the little green stuff-gowns of the girls, with their snow-white tippets, their bibs and aprons, and mobs. I know nothing prettier than to view on a Sunday morning the train of these primitive-looking little maidens (the children of “ Mr. West’s charity”) pacing demurely down the steps of their equally picturesque and old-fashioned dwelling, on their way to church, the house itself a complete relique of the domestic architecture of Elizabeth’s day, in excellent preservation, and the deep bay-windows adorned with geraniums (the only modern things about the place), which even my kind friend Mr. Foster* need not be ashamed to own. I doubt

* Edward Foster, Esq. of Clewer.—Mr. Foster is perhaps, I may say certainly, the greatest geranium grower in England. That his gardener wins the head prizes wherever his master deems the competition worthy of his notice, is little ; —his commonest geraniums would bear away the meed

if any body else in the county could surpass them.

But the school of schools in Belford, that which was pre-eminently called Belford School, of which the town was justly proud, and for which it was justly famous, was a foundation of a far higher class and character, but of nearly

from any of his rivals—although commonest is the wrong word, since his flowers are all, so to say, original — being seedlings raised by himself, or by his brother Captain Foster. Although so thoroughly independent of any adventitious aid in his own collection, he is yet most kind and generous in the distribution of his own plants, as I can well testify. People are very kind to me in every way, and in nothing kinder than in supplying my little garden with flowers: one kind friend sends me roses, another dablías, a third heart's-ease. Everybody is kind to me, but Mr. Foster is kindest of all. Perhaps I may be permitted to transcribe here some trifling lines, accompanied by a still more trifling book, in which I endeavoured, not to repay, but to acknowledge my obligation for his innumerable favours — favours greatly enhanced by the circumstance of my being personally unknown to my kind and liberal friend.

TO EDWARD FOSTER, ESQ.

OF CLEWER LODGE, SEPT. 1832.

Rich as the lustrous gems which line
 With ruddy light the Indian mine;
 Bright as the gorgeous birds which fly
 Glittering across the Tropic sky;

the same date with the endowments for boys and girls which I have just mentioned.

Belford School was one of those free grammar-schools which followed almost as a matter of course upon the Reformation, when education, hitherto left chiefly to the monks and monasteries, was taken out of their hands, and placed under the care of the secular clergy; — the

And various as the beams which pass
To Gothic fanes through storied glass;
In such distinct yet mingling glow,
Foster ! thy famed geraniums show,
That scarce Aladdin's magic bowers,
Where trees were gold, and gems were flowers,
(That vision dear to Fancy's eye,)
Can match thy proud reality.

And, bounteous of thy flowery store,
My little garden, burnish'd o'er
With thy rich gifts, seems to express
In each bright bloom its thankfulness,—
The usance nature gives for good,
A mute but smiling gratitude !

Ill payment for thy splendid flowers,
This sober-suited book of ours ;
And yet in homely guise it shows
Deep love of every flower that blows,
And with kind thanks may haply blend
Kind wishes from an unknown friend.

master, necessarily in orders, and provided with testimonials and degrees, being chosen by the Corporation, who had also the power of sending a certain number of boys, the sons of poor townsmen, for gratuitous instruction, and the privilege of electing off a certain number of boys to scholarships and fellowships at various colleges in Oxford. The master's salary was, as usual, small, and his house large, so that the real remuneration of the gentlemen who conduct these grammar-schools — one of which is to be found in almost every great town in England, where the greater part of our professional men and country gentry have been educated, and from whence so many eminent persons have been sent forth — depends almost wholly upon the boarders and day-scholars not on the foundation, whilst the number of boarders is of course contingent on the character and learning of the master.

And it was to the high character, the extensive learning, and the well-merited popularity of the late venerable master, that Belford School was indebted for being at one period

next, perhaps, to Rugby, in point of numbers, and second to none in reputation.

The school was the first thing shown to strangers. Prints of the school hung up in the shops, and engravings and drawings of the same cherished spot might be met in many mansions far and near. East and west, north and south — in London, in India, abroad and at home, were those pictures seen — frequently accompanied by a fine engraving of the master, whose virtues had endeared to his pupils those boyish recollections which, let poets talk as they will, are but too often recollections of needless privation, repulsed affection, and unrewarded toil.

Belford School was in itself a pretty object — at least I, who loved it almost as much as if I had been of the sex that learns Greek and Latin, thought it so. It was a spacious dwelling, standing in a nook of the pleasant green called the Forbury, and parted from the churchyard of St. Nicholas by a row of tall old houses, in two or three of which the under-masters lived, and, the Doctor's mansion being overflowing, received boarders, for the purpose of attending

the school. There was a little court before the door with four fir-trees, and at one end a projecting bay-window, belonging to a very long room, or rather gallery, lined with a noble collection of books, several thousand volumes, rich, not merely in classical lore, but in the best editions of the best authors in almost every language.

In the sort of recess formed by this window the dear Doctor (the Doctor *par excellence*) generally sat out of school-hours. There he held his levees, or his drawing-rooms (for ladies were by no means excluded)—finding time, as your very busy (or in other words, your very *active*) people so often do, to keep up with all the topics of the day, from the gravest politics (and the good Doctor was a keen politician) to the lightest pleasantry. In that long room, too, which would almost have accommodated a mayor's feast, his frequent and numerous dinner-parties were generally held. It was the only apartment in that temple of hospitality large enough to satisfy his own open heart. The guests who had a general invitation to his table would almost have filled it.

His person had an importance and stateliness which answered to the popular notion of a schoolmaster, and certainly contributed to the influence of his manner over his pupils. So most undoubtedly did his fine countenance. It must have been a real punishment to have disturbed the serenity of those pale placid features, or the sweetness of that benevolent smile.

Benevolence was, after all, his prime characteristic. Full of knowledge, of wisdom, and of learning, an admirable schoolmaster,* and exemplary in every relation of life, his singular kindness of heart was his most distinguishing quality. Nothing could ever warp his candour—that candour which is so often the wisest justice, or stifle his charity; and his pardon followed so immediately an offence, or an injury, that people began to think that there was no great merit in such placability—that it was an affair of temperament, and that he forgave because he could not help forgiving—just as another man might have resented. His school

* “He teacheth best who knoweth best.”—*Cary's Pindar*.

was of course an unspeakable advantage to the town; but of all the benefits which he daily conferred upon his neighbours, his friends, his pupils, and his family, by very far the greatest was his example.

If he were beloved by his pupils, his sweet and excellent wife was almost idolized. Lovelier in middle age than the lovely daughters (a wreath of living roses) by whom she was surrounded, pure, simple, kind, and true, no human being ever gathered around her more sincere and devoted affection than the charming lady of Belford School. Next to his own dear mother, every boy loved her; and her motherly feeling, her kindness, and her sympathy seemed inexhaustible; she had care and love for all.* There is a portrait of her too;

* The following lines were written on the lamented death of this most charming and excellent woman:—

Heavy each heart and clouded every eye,
And meeting friends turn half away to sigh;
For she is gone, before whose soft control
Sadness and sorrow fled the troubled soul;
For she is gone, whose cheering smiles had power
To speed on pleasure's wing the social hour;

but it does not do her justice. The pictures that are really like her, are the small Madonnas of Raphael, of which there are two or three in the Stafford Gallery : they have her open forehead, her divine expression, her simple grace. Raphael was one of the few even of the old masters who knew how to paint such women ; who could unite such glowing beauty with such transparent purity !

Perhaps one of the times at which the Doctor was seen to most advantage was on a Sunday

Long shall her thought with friendly greeting blend,
For she is gone who was of all a friend !
Such were her charms as Raphael loved to trace,
Repeat, improve, in each Madonna's face :
The broad fair forehead, the full modest eye,
Cool cheeks, but of the damask rose's dye,
And coral lips that breathed of purity.
Such, but more lovely ; for serenely bright
Her sunny spirit shone with living light,
Far, far beyond the narrow bounds of art,—
Hers was the very beauty of the heart,
Beauty that must be loved. The weeping child,
Homesick and sad, has gazed on her and smiled—
Has heard her voice, and in its gentle sound
Another home, another mother found.

And as she seem'd she was : from day to day
Wisdom and virtue mark'd her peaceful way.

afternoon in his own school-room, where, surrounded by his lovely wife, his large and promising family, his pupils and servants, and occasionally by a chosen circle of friends and guests, he was accustomed to perform the evening service, two of the elder boys reading the lessons, and he himself preaching, with an impressiveness which none that ever heard him can forget, those doctrines of peace and goodwill, of holiness, and of charity, of which his whole life was an illustration.

Large was her circle, but the cheerful breast
Spread wide around her happiness and rest.
She had sweet words and pleasant looks for all,
And precious kindness at the mourner's call ;
Charity, quick to give and slow to blame,
And lingering still in that unfaded frame,
The fairest, the most fleeting charms of youth,
Bloom of the mind, simplicity and truth ;
And, pure Religion, thine eternal light,
Beam'd round that brow in mortal beauty bright,
Spake in that voice, soft as the mother-dove,
Found in that gentle breast thy home of love.
So knit she friendship's lovely knot. How well
She fill'd each tenderer name, no verse can tell ;
That last best praise lives in her husband's sigh,
And floating dims her children's glistening eye,
Embalming with fond tears her memory.

It is, however, a scene of a different nature that I have undertaken to chronicle ; and I must hasten to record, so far as an unlettered woman may achieve that presumptuous task, the triumphs of Sophocles and Euripides on the boards of Belford School.

The foundation was subject to a triennial visitation of the Heads of some of the Houses at Oxford, for the purpose of examining the pupils, and receiving those elected to scholarships in their respective colleges ; and the examination had been formerly accompanied, as is usual, by Greek and Latin recitations, prize-poems, speeches, &c. ; but about thirty years back it occurred to the good Doctor, who had a strong love of the drama, knew Shakspeare nearly as well as he knew Homer, and would talk of the old actors, Garrick, Henderson,* Mrs. Yates, and

* Henderson was his favourite. So, from MS. letters in my possession, I find him to have been, with Captain Jephson, the author of the "Count de Narbonne," the "Italian Lover," &c. and the friend both of Garrick and of John Kemble. Intellect seems to have been his remarkable characteristic, and that quality which results from intellect, but does not always belong to it—taste. What an artist

Miss Farren, until you could fancy that you had seen them, that a Greek drama, well got up, would improve the boys both in the theory and practice of elocution, and in the familiar and critical knowledge of the language; that it would fix their attention and stimulate their industry in a manner far beyond any common tasks or examinations; that it would interest their parents and amuse their friends; that the purity of the Greek tragedies rendered them (unlike the Latin comedies which time has sanctioned at Westminster) unexceptionable for such a purpose; and that a classical exhibition of so high an order would be worthy of his own name in the world of letters, and of the high reputation of his establishment.

Hence arose the Greek plays of Belford School.

Everything conduced to the success of the experiment. It so happened that the old must that man have been who played Hamlet and Falstaff on following nights, beating his young competitor Kemble in the one part, and his celebrated predecessor Quin in the other! His early death was perhaps the greatest loss that the stage ever sustained.

school-room—not then used for its original destination, as the Doctor had built a spacious apartment for that purpose, closer to his own library—was the very place that a manager would have desired for a theatre; being a very long and large room, communicating at one end with the school-house, and opening at the other into the entrance to the Town-hall, under which it was built. The end next the house, excellently fitted up with scenery and properties, and all the modern accessories of the drama, formed the stage, whilst the rest of the room held the audience; and a prettier stage, whether for public or private theatricals, hath seldom been seen. It was just the right size, just a proper frame for the fine tragic pictures it so often exhibited. If it had been larger, the illusion which gave the appearance of men and women to the young performers would have been destroyed, and the effect of the grouping much diminished by the comparative unimportance which space and vacancy give to the figures on the scene. That stage would be the very thing for the fashionable amusement of

tableaux ;* but even then they would want the presiding genius of our great master, who, although he pretended to no skill in the art, must have had a painter's eye, for never did I see such grouping. "Oh for an historical painter!" was Mr. Bowles the poet's exclamation, both at the death and the unveiling of Alcestis; and I never saw any one of the performances in which a young artist would not have found a series of models for composition and expression.

Besides the excellence of the theatre, the audience, another main point in the drama, was crowded, intelligent, and enthusiastic. The visitors from Oxford, and the Mayor and Cor-

* The usual tableaux, mere copies of pictures by living people—a pretty retaliation on Art, who, it is to be presumed, herself copied from Nature—are, with all their gracefulness, rather insipid; but some fair young friends of mine, girls of great taste and talent, have been introducing a very pretty innovation on the original idea, by presenting in dumb show some of the most striking scenes of Scott's poems, "Marmion" and "The Lay," thus superadding the grace of motion to that of attitude, and forming a new and graceful amusement, half-way between play and picture, for the affluent and the fair.

poration of Belford, (in their furred gowns,—poor dear aldermen, I wonder they survived the heat!—but I suppose they did, for I never remember to have heard of any coroner's inquest at Belford, of which the verdict was “Died of the Greek plays,”) these, the grandees of the University and the Borough, attended *ex-officio*; the parents and friends of the performers were drawn there by the pleasanter feelings of affection and pride, and the principal inhabitants of the town and neighbourhood crowded to the theatre for a double reason—they liked it, and it was the fashion.

Another most delighted part of the audience consisted of the former pupils of the school, the Doctor's old scholars, who had formed themselves into a sort of club, meeting in the winter in London, and in the autumn at one of the principal inns at Belford, whither they thronged from all parts of England, and where, especially at the time of the triennial plays, they often stayed days and weeks, to assist at rehearsals and partake of the social gaiety of that merry time. For weeks before the

plays, the Doctor's ever-hospitable house was crowded with visitors; his sons stealing a short absence from their several professions, with sometimes a blushing bride (for, in imitation of their father, they married early and happily); fair young friends of his fair daughters; distinguished foreigners; celebrated scholars; nephews, nieces, cousins, and friends, without count or end. It was one scene of bustle and gaiety; the gentle mistress smiling through it all, and seeming as if she had nothing to do but to make her innumerable guests as happy and as cheerful as she was herself. No one that entered the house could doubt her sincerity of welcome. However crowded the apartments might be, the gentle hostess had heart-room for all.

A pleasant scene it was for weeks before the play, since of all pleasures, especially of theatrical pleasures, the preparation is the most delightful; and in these preparations there was a more than common portion of amusing contrasts and diverting difficulties. Perhaps the training of the female characters

was the most fertile in fun. Fancy a quick and lively boy learning to tread mincingly, and carry himself demurely, and move gently, and curtsy modestly, and speak softly, and blush, and cast down his eyes, and look as like a girl as if he had all his life worn petticoats. Fancy the vain attempt, by cold cream and chicken-skin gloves to remove the stain of the summer's sun, and bring the coarse red paws into a semblance of feminine delicacy ! Fancy the rebellion of the lad, and his hatred of stays, and his horror of paint, and the thousand droll incidents that, partly from accident and partly from design, were sure to happen at each rehearsal, (the rehearsal of an English tragedy at a real theatre is comical enough, Heaven knows !) and it will not be astonishing that, in spite of the labour required by the study of so many long speeches, the performers as well as the guests behind the scenes were delighted with the getting-up of the Greek plays.

And in spite of their difficulties with the feminine costume, never did I see female characters more finely represented than by

these boys. The lads of Shakspeare's days who played his Imogenes, and Constances, and Mirandas, could not have exceeded the Alcestises, and Electras, and Antigones of Belford School. And the male characters were almost equally perfect. The masterpieces of the Greek stage were performed not only with a critical accuracy in the delivery of the text, but with an animation and fervour which marked all the shades of feeling, as if the young actors had been accustomed to think and to feel in Greek. The effect produced upon the audience was commensurate with the excellence of the performance. The principal scenes were felt as truly as if they had been given in English by some of our best actors. Even the most unlettered lady was sensible to that antique grace and pathos, and understood a beauty in the words, though not the words.

Another attraction of these classical performances was the English prologue and epilogue by which they were preceded and followed. These were always written by old pupils of the school, and I cannot resist the

temptation of transcribing one from the pen of the most remarkable person, the most learned, the most eloquent, and the most amiable which that school has ever produced — Mr. Serjeant Talfourd. It is a trifle, for a great lawyer has no time to dally with the Muse ; but if one or two stray copies of these desultory volumes should chance to survive the present generation, they will derive a value not their own from possessing even the lightest memorial of a man whose genius and whose virtues can never be forgotten, whilst the writer will find her proudest ambition gratified in being allowed to claim the title of his friend.

PROLOGUE TO THE HECUBA OF EURIPIDES.

SPOKEN OCT. 1827.

“ Kind friends, with genial plaudits may we close
 Our feeble miniature of mighty woes ?
 Or think you that we aim to strike, too late,
 With crimes antique, and passions out of date ?
 No : altered but in form life’s stage they fill,
 And all our characters are extant still.

“ First, Hecuba :—nay, there my scheme’s too bold,
 I grant—no lady in these times grows old ;
 But not in vain you’ll seek the ancient rage
 In some starch vixen of ‘ *a certain age*.’

Thus if you chance, though fair in her regards,
At whist her partner, to forget the cards,
Stop scandal's torrent with a word of peace,
Offend her cat, or compliment her niece ;
Beneath her rouge when deeper colours rise,
Remember Hecuba—and mind your eyes.

“ Still would the mild Ulysses win the town,
His armour barter'd for a Counsel's gown :
Severest truths, he never practised, teach,
And be profuse of wealth and life—in speech.
Or on the hustings gain th' inspiring cheer ;—
But hold ! we own no politicians here.
The radiant colours Iris wreathes in heaven,
May but be foes at most one year in seven,
And mingling brighter from the generous strife
Shed rainbow hues on passion-wearied life.

“ What ! if the Thracian's guilt we rarely see—
Thousands for gain were lately mad as he ;
When Trade held strange alliance with Romance,
And Fancy lent delusive shades to Chance—
Bade golden visions hover o'er the Strand,
And made 'Change-alley an enchanted land.
There the rapt merchant dreamt of Sinbad's vale,
And catalogued in thought its gems for sale ;
There dived to Vigo's time-unalter'd caves
And ransom'd millions from the courteous waves.
Still might some daring band their arts employ,
To search for Priam's treasures hid in Troy—
For gold, which Polymnestor did *not find*,
But only missed, because the rogue was blind.
Or, since our classic robbers dote on Greece,
Set paper-sails to win her Golden Fleece ;

And bid her hopes, revived by civic pity,
Flash in a loan to fade in a committee.

“ Nor need we here Imagination’s aid
To own the virtue of the Trojan maid.
Would any ask where courage meek as hers
Truth’s saddest tests to garish joy prefers,
Where Love earth’s fragile clay to heaven allies,
And life prolong’d is one sweet sacrifice—
Where gentlest wisdom waits to cheer and guide ye;—
Husbands and lovers, only look beside ye !

“ And if our actors gave but feeble hints
Of the old Bard’s imperishable tints,
Yet, if with them some classic grace abide,
And bid no British thought or throb subside,
Right well we know your fondest wish you gain,
We have not toiled, nor you approved in vain.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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